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SHANDON BELLS

SHANDON BELLS

A Novel

BY

WILLIAM BLACK

AUTHOR OF 'MACLEOD OF DARE,' 'SUNRISE,' ETC.

"With deep affection
And recollection
I often think of
Those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would
In the days of childhood
Fling round my cradle
Their magic spells."
FATHER PROUT.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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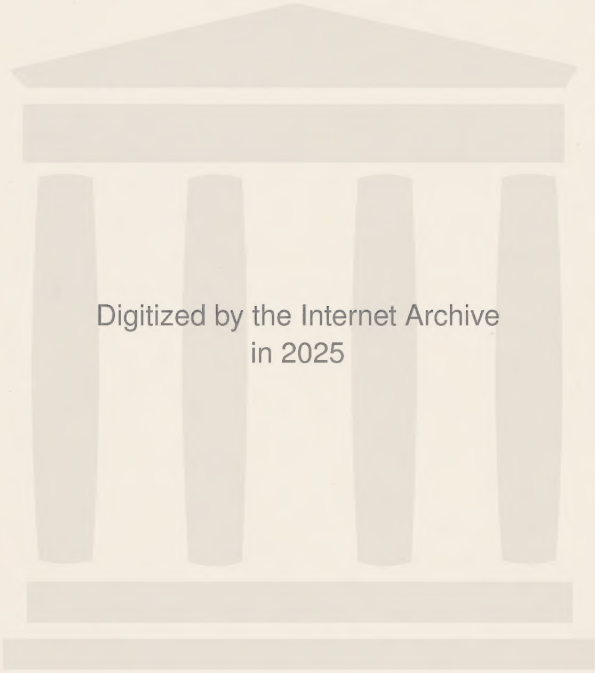
TO THE MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF 'MOORLAND AND STREAM,' 'SPORTING SKETCHES AND HOLIDAY RAMBLES,' AND OTHER WRITINGS; AND TO THE MEMORY OF A LONG AND INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP; THIS BOOK, WHICH HAS BEEN LARGELY COLOURED BY BOTH, IS AFFECTIONATELY, BUT NOW AIMLESSLY, DEDICATED.

London, 1882.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SHANDON BELLS.

CHAPTER I.

"OVER RUNNING WATER."

So still this night was. The white moonlight lay over the sleeping world; the Atlantic was calm; the little harbour-town of Inisheen, with all its picturesque squalor of quays and creeks and stranded boats, had gone to rest; and here, high up in this inland glen (from which the sea was visible only as a sharp line of silver at the horizon), among the felled trees and the brushwood, there was no sound save the continuous "hush—sh—sh" of the streamlet far below in the darkness. Nor was there any sign of life in this open glade —not even a rabbit out browsing on the dew-wet grass, or a curlew crossing the clear depths of the blue-gray sky in its flight from

the moor to the shore. Only the moonlight shining calm and still on the wilderness of bramble and bracken and furze, and here and there on the white stump of a felled beech or ash; and always the murmur, down below, of the unseen rivulet on its way to the Blackwater and the sea.

But by-and-by, along the road over there, that was barred across by the shadows of some tall elms, two people came slowly walking, and the cheerful sound of their speaking was clear in the stillness.

"The more I think of it," said one of them, who was a very pretty, slightly-formed young lady, with eyes as black as the sloe, a mouth that could assume a most piquant expression, and a voice that was soft and musical and laughing, "the more I think of it, this seems the most extraordinary escapade I ever entered upon. Altogether a most decorous proceeding! I suppose by this time every soul in Inisheen is fast asleep; and no doubt Miss Romayne is supposed to be asleep too —and dreaming of the Conservatoire and her *début* at Covent Garden; while as for Master

Willie, if he were to be missed, of course they'd imagine he was away after the wild-duck again; so it would be all right for him. Sure I think," she added, altering her voice slightly, and speaking very shyly, "sure I think 'tis I am the wild-duck that Masther Willie is afther."

"Do you know, Kitty," said her companion, who was taller and fairer than she, a young fellow of two-and-twenty, perhaps, with light-brown wavy hair, the shrewdest of clear blue eyes, and a well-set, slim figure, "do you know, Kitty, when you speak in our Irish way like that, my heart is just full of love for you."

"Oh, indeed!" she said, in a tone of surprise. "Oh, indeed. And at other times what is it full of, then?"

"Well, at other times," he said, "at other times, you see—well, at other times, Kitty, do you know, it is just full of love for you. Never mind. When I go to England I'll soon get rid of the Cork accent; and when I come back to you, Kitty——"

"Indeed you may save yourself the

trouble," she interposed promptly. "I am not going to have any stranger come back to me. I am going to have nobody but my wild Irish boy, with whatever accent he has, and with all the—the—cheek he is not likely to get rid of anywhere. There's no other word for it, I declare. Such cheek as never was heard of! Do you know, sir, that I sang at the Crystal Palace with Titiens and Santley?"

"You've reminded me of it pretty often, Kitty," was the meek reply.

"Yes; and Miss Catherine Romayne, who has sent all Dublin wild with her singing of Irish songs, who could make engagements all over Ireland for the rest of her natural life, comes to Cork—to find herself patronised by the *Cork Chronicle!* The *Cork Chronicle*, indeed! And it isn't the editor, mind you, but only the sub-editor—does he sweep out the office, too?—that has undertaken to sing the praises of Miss Romayne, and make the whole country understand what a wonder she is! Dear me, what beautiful language! *It has been reserved for an English singer to*

reveal to the Irish people the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon.' Truly! What did they think the song was, then? Did they think it was comic? Then came the usual thing —I foresaw it from the beautiful writing in the *Cork Chronicle*—bouquets; complimentary notes; finally an introduction; and behold! the sub-editor of the *Chronicle* isn't in the least a pale youth with long hair and inky fingers, but rather half a young gamekeeper and half a young squireen and the remainder a fair-haired Apollo Belvedere with a delightful accent and the most ingenuous blush. And oh, such innocence! and oh, such modesty! Modesty! 'May he be permitted to call?' And the very next day, as Miss Romayne and her faithful guardian are seated at their midday meal, there's a knock at the door; and enter Mr. Modesty! Bless the man, I said to myself, doesn't he know what's what, but he must pay an afternoon call at two o'clock in the day? Anybody in his senses would have backed out; but you weren't the least in your senses—confess it now, Willie!——"

"Were you?—when you found your pretty black hair was all about your shoulders, and bottled stout on the table? And 'would Mr. Fitzgerald sit down and have some lunch?' and 'would Mr. Fitzgerald prefer a glass of sherry?' At all events you were civil-mannered then, Kitty."

This was carrying the war into the enemy's country; but she paid no heed.

"I think you grew more happy, Willie, when I went to the piano and so got my back turned on you, and when Miss Patience took her newspaper to the window; at least you grew more audacious in your flattery—there was something about Tara's harp being awakened again—and then—there was a moment—after that 'Bells of Shandon' that you would have—I think there was a moment when I chanced to turn, and I fancied young Mr. Gamekeeper's clear blue eyes weren't quite so clear as usual—can you tell me?"

"It seems a long time ago," he said absently, "though it isn't. Can you tell me, Kitty, why it is that Miss Patience, who was

so friendly with me at first, took it into her head to quarrel with me?"

"Why, you quarrelled with her!"

"Nonsense; I did nothing of the sort," he said, with a laugh. "But when her manner changed all of a sudden and she practically forbade me the house, of course I took the hint."

"And a nice position both of you have put me into. But mind you, Master Willie, whether you had been going to England or not, this must have been the last of these hole-and-corner meetings. Moonlight walks are very pleasant; but—but it won't do, you know, especially for one placed as I am. There is such a thing as propriety, though you don't seem to think so. And now I suppose this one is to be the most fatal of all, with witcheries, and enchantments, and what not. By the way," she added, stopping short in the road, and looking him straight in the face. "How do I know what you mayn't be making me promise? When you repeated some of the gibberish the other night of course I couldn't understand a word."

"Don't be alarmed, Kitty; I will put it all into English for you. And we are close by the place now; if you will step over this bit of the wall, I will take you down into the glen."

He helped her over the low moss-grown wall, and they emerged from under the shadow of the elms into the clear open glade described above. Her face, which was unusually expressive by reason of those soft, large, sloe-black eyes, was more serious now. She glanced up and down the wooded valley, lying all white in the moonlight, and then said to him, almost in a whisper—

"Is this where you said the saints shut up Don Fierna and the pixies?"

"No," he said, "that was away over there in the mountains. But they say the little people can get out into this valley; and you won't catch many of the Inisheen natives about here after dark. Farther up the glen there is a very curious echo; of course that is Don Fierna answering you when you call to him. But they don't like to speak of such things about here; the priests are against it."

"And the well?"

"It is down there," he answered, pointing to the narrow ravine which seemed jet black below them.

"Oh, I can't go down there, Willie," she said, almost shuddering.

"It is very easy," he answered cheerfully, to reassure her. "And you won't find it dark when once you are down. Give me your hand, Kitty; hold tight, and watch where you put your feet."

Slowly and cautiously they made their way down the side of the chasm, through the bracken and furze and tangled underwood, until at last they reached the bed of the streamlet at a point where the water tumbled into a natural basin that had been worn out of the rock. Nor was it quite so dark as it had appeared from above. The bushes around them were quite black, it is true; but the clear sky far overhead lent a reflected light that touched here and there the falling water and the troubled pool with a wan gleam. It was strange that the noise of the brook appeared to make no impression on the sound

of their voices. This seemed to be an absolute silence in which they spoke.

He stepped across the water—she remaining on this side; and then he reached his hand to her.

"Give me your hand, Kitty."

She did so in silence. Their outstretched hands were clasped together over the stream.

"You must repeat to me what I say to you—it is quite simple, Kitty. Don't be afraid." (For he thought she was trembling somewhat.) "*Over running water: My love I give to you; my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs.*"

He listened for her voice; it was scarcely audible.

"Over running water: My love I give to you," she said; "my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs. Willie, it is not hard to promise that. I will say it again if you wish me to."

"Listen, Kitty. *Over running water: Every seventh year, at this time of the year, at*

this time of the night, I will meet you at this well, to renew my troth to you: death alone to relieve me from this vow."

She repeated the words without faltering.

"And this is the last, Kitty. *Over running water: A curse on the one that fails; and a curse on any that shall try to come between us two; and grief to be a guest in their house, and sorrow to dwell in their house, for ever.*"

"Oh no, not that, Willie!" she cried, almost piteously. "Let this be a love night! Don't let there be any hatred in it. I don't mind the rest—but not that!"

He did not answer; he held her hand in silence.

"Well, if you want me to, I will. Tell me the words again."

No sooner was the ceremony, or charm, or whatever it might be called, completed, than he leapt across the little stream, and caught her in his arms, and kissed her.

"Now you are mine, Kitty! Bell, book, and candle can't divide us now. But why are you trembling? You are not afraid?—

you who are afraid of nothing! Come, we will clamber up again into the moonlight; you know if Don Fierna has let any of his little people out, you would never get a glimpse of them away down here. Wouldn't it be fine to see the procession come down through the bracken—

> 'Trooping all together,
> Green Jacket, Red Cap
> And White Owl's Feather.'

—Kitty, what is the matter with you?"

"Yes, let us get away," she said in a low voice. "I want to be up in the light—give me your hand, Willie."

So he helped her to clamber up through the brushwood again until they got into the moonlight; and as they made for the road, he noticed that she glanced back for a second —a hasty, frightened glance, it seemed—at the dark hollow from which they had emerged. But he would not have her frightened on such a night as this. He would have nothing but gladness, and hope, and love-promises on such a night. And she was very impressionable. Soon she was laughing. Soon she

was scolding him for not having ordered a review of the little people for her beforehand. Here she had come to the very headquarters of the elves and the pixies; and not one to be seen.

"Oh yes, one," she admitted. "I have indeed made the acquaintance of one—on the beach this morning; and a more extraordinary one Mr. Doyle never drew. You know him, Willie—at least he says he knows you very well—a little man with wild red hair, and a tall hat, and a gray jacket with scarlet sleeves——"

"Why, it's Andy the Hopper. Had he his pole with him?"

"What pole?"

"The leaping-pole he has for taking short cuts across the bog," said he, greatly delighted to see her so cheerful again.

"I didn't see any pole. But I made out very soon that he was intimately acquainted with you; and so I thought I might as well get some independent testimony about the character of my husband that is to be. Oh, I assure you I was most discreet. Andy the

Hopper, if that is his name, had very little notion why I wanted to know this or that about the Fitzgeralds, and especially about Mr. William Fitzgerald. Would you like to know how he described you, Willie?"

"If Andy the Hopper has been saying anything against me—I mean to you, Kitty, —I'll beat the blackguard with his own pole till there's not an inch of whole skin on him," was her companion's decisive reply.

"'Is it Masther Willie ye mane?" he said. I said it was. 'Sure, miss, 'tis the duck's back that Masther Willie has got, and trouble runs off it like water. At the very ind of the day if he was to lose the biggest salmon ever hooked in the Blackwater, d'ye think he'd be afther sittin' down and cryin'? Divil a bit—begging your pardon, miss. He'd be whistlin' the ould tunes as he put up the rod; and then away home wid his spaches and his singing and his poethry, and a laugh and a joke for all the gyurls that he'd meet. Glory be to God, miss, but 'tis Masther Willie has the light heart.' But wait a moment, Master Willie. I thought that phrase about the

gyurls a little singular. Or rather it isn't singular, for it's plural. How many gyurls is an Irish young gentleman supposed to be in love with at the same time? Don't I know the song—

'Here's a health to the girls that we loved long ago
Where the Shannon, and Liffey, and Blackwater flow'—

—Why 'girls?'"

"Why not, Kitty? The song is about the Irish Brigade. You wouldn't have the whole brigade in love with one?"

"I don't know; it sounds suspicious; and I suppose we are not more than a stone's throw from the Blackwater now. But you may reassure yourself, Master Willie. I was very discreet. I put no questions about the gyurls to the gentleman in the red-sleeved jacket; and so he went on to say you were a great sportsman, and to give me many stories of midnight adventures you and he had had together, after the wild-fowl."

"That's all over now, Kitty," said he, looking away across to the shallows and the mud-flats of the wide bay of Inisheen, where many a time he had brought a mallard thump-

ing down, or listened to the clang of a string of wild-geese far overhead in the dark. "London is a terrible place to be alone in. I remember the first time I went there, and saw the miles and miles of streets and houses, and the strange faces, and the crowds hurrying and hurrying and hurrying, I said to myself I should lose heart altogether if I were to find myself alone in such a tremendous ocean, fighting to keep my head above water. Better the *Cork Chronicle;* and an ambition limited to the publishing of one small volume of poems some day; and, for the rest of it, over the bog after snipe, or up the mountain after hares, with Andy the Hopper. And then you must needs come along, Kitty, and spoil all my content. Even now I fear I am going to London against my better judgment. Having you, Kitty, what do I want with fame or money?"

"Stuff. I know you are fearfully ambitious, Master Willie, though you won't own it. Would you like to go on for ever as the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle?* Would you have me keep singing away at concerts until

my little share of good looks was gone, and then the public would discover there was nothing in my singing at all? I am certain your philosophy is all pretence. I don't believe Andy the Hopper a bit when he says you'd only whistle an ould tune or spake poethry after losing a big fish; I believe you would be much nearer crying with vexation. You don't impose on me, Master Willie; and we will see some day whether London is too big for you to fight."

"If it was the old times, Kitty, and I could start with a shield and a spear and your ribbon round my arm: that would be something like the thing. But at any rate I can carry your name in my heart."

She stopped and took his head in her two hands, and pulled it down and kissed him lightly on the forehead.

"That is where the victor's crown is to be," she said.

"I am not thinking of any victor's crown," said he. "I am thinking of the trip that you and I will make, every seven years, to this old place of Inisheen, and our going over the

old walks again, and thinking of old times. And the day may come, Kitty, when getting down that steep bank may be too much for frail old limbs, and perhaps Don Fierna will excuse us, if we make the pilgrimage, and show him that we have not separated, even if we don't try to go down to the well."

"Seven years," she said, musingly. "It is a long time, Willie——"

But he did not hear her. He had stepped down to unmoor a small boat that lay half-hidden in the shadow of a creek. When he was ready, he called to her; and then he assisted her, with the most affectionate care, into the stern of the boat, and pulled her shawl close at the neck, and generally had her made comfortable. Then he took the oars, and in a few moments they had shot out into the broad and shallow and moonlit waters of the inner bay of Inisheen. As yet they could talk together openly without fear of being overheard from the shore; for Inisheen itself—a tumbled mass of houses and quays and vessels—lay away along there, between them and the Atlantic.

"Besides," continued Miss Romayne, as if she had been resuming some argument, "you say yourself this is such a chance as you might never get again."

"Well, it is a chance," he answered, slowly pulling away at the short (and muffled) oars. "Fancy Hilton Clarke being in Inisheen, and no one knowing it!"

"Perhaps they were all as wise as I was, Willie, and had never heard his name before!"

"You must have heard his name, Kitty," he said impatiently. "Why, he is one of the most distinguished men of letters in England——"

"But what has he done, Willie?"

"Oh, everything," he said, rather confusedly. "Every one knows who he is. There is scarcely a better-known name in contemporary literature——"

"But what has he done, Willie? I might get it and read it, you know."

"Why, he is one of the greatest critics of the day—writes for all sorts of things—there is no one better known. He is said to have the finest judgment in literary matters of

almost anybody living; and the reviews that he writes are always so scholarly, and—and —full of happy ingenuities of expression—any one can recognise them——"

"Yes," said the pertinacious young lady with the pretty mouth and the soft dark eyes, "but hasn't he done anything himself? Hasn't he done any work of his own? Couldn't I buy a book of his, to let me know something more of your wonderful hero?"

"Well, I believe he translated *Les Fleurs du Mal*—the original edition—but the book was privately printed——"

"I am sure I never heard of it, in English or anything else," said she.

"Perhaps you never heard of Baudelaire either, Kitty," said he, gently. "You see it would be easy for you to puzzle me about the distinguished people in music—I know so little about what's going on in music."

"Oh, very well," said she, good-naturedly, "let him be as distinguished as you like; that can't make him an agreeable-looking man."

"I consider him very handsome," he said, in astonishment.

"What!—that lanky, supercilious, white-faced creature, with his stony stare?"

He burst out laughing.

"I do believe you're jealous, Kitty! Why, you only saw him for a second, at the door of the Imperial, and you have never spoken to him. I consider him an exceedingly fine fellow, and the trouble he took about me—a perfect stranger to him—was quite extraordinary. It was indeed a chance, my running against him at all. You know, Kitty," said he—though there was a slight blush on his face—"I am not ashamed of my father keeping an inn—or a public-house, or whatever you may call it——"

"An inn!" she exclaimed. "A public-house! The Impayrial Hotel—the only hotel in Inisheen—to be talked of like that!"

"— but all the same when I come here I don't go into the smoking-room. It is always filled with these Coursing Club people; and the Duke of Wellington 'wrenched, killed, and won like a hero;' and Sweetbriar was 'slow from the slips;' and Timothy 'scored first turn;' and Miss Maguire 'finished with

the most lovely mill;' and all the rest of the jargon. Indeed I'd rather go to another inn, if there was one, when I come to Inisheen; but that might vex my father. Well, this stranger I didn't meet at the inn at all; but along the road: with his basket and rod and gaff all complete; and as we got talking about fishing, I looked over his fly-book for him—all sorts of fantastic nonsense got up in London to look pretty in a drawing-room. Then I offered to show him some flies. Then it turned out he was staying at the Imperial. And then we had a long evening together—all contrariwise; for I had found out who he was, and I wanted to talk about all the literary men in London—and he seemed to know every one of them; but he wanted to talk about nothing but river-trout and sea-trout and grilse and salmon, and the different rivers in the neighbourhood. But it was a fine evening, all the same; and he showed himself most friendly—and has been so ever since, Miss Kitty, in his letters. And just fancy his asking me, a young newspaper fellow in Cork, to come and see him as

soon as I get to London! If you only knew the position he holds. But I think we'd better be quiet now, Kitty, until we get past the town."

Picturesque indeed was the old town of Inisheen on this beautiful night—the moonlight shining on the windows of the few houses on the side of the hill and on the gray gables along the harbour, and causing the golden cock on the top of the old Town Hall to gleam as if it were a repetition of the beacon-light far away there on the cliff overlooking the sea; while heavy masses of shadow lay over the various creeks and quays, where broad-bottomed vessels had found a berth in the ooze. But there was another Inisheen—an Inisheen of new and trim villas—that formed a fashionable watering-place fronting the open sea; and there it was that Miss Romayne lodged; and thither it was that Master Willie was stealthily rowing. Indeed, they soon drew away from the picturesque old town, and found before them the gently murmuring Atlantic, that broke in a fringe of silver foam all along the level sands.

And Miss Romayne was singing too—not with the fine contralto voice that she could send ringing through a vast hall, but humming to herself, as it were, in a low and gentle fashion "Farewell! but whenever you welcome the hour," and putting a good deal more pathos into the words than appears there if one reads them in cold blood. For she had a pathetic voice; and these two were alone under the shining heavens and on the beautiful, calm sea; and they were young, and life and love were before them; and also the tragic misery of parting.

"I will bid you the real good-bye to-night, Willie," she said, "and then I don't care for fifty Miss Patiences to-morrow. You must put me ashore at the jetty; and I will walk up alone. She is sure to be asleep. If not —then I was restless, and had to go out for a walk. And you will stop at the jetty, Willie, until you see me right up at the house, in case Don Fierna and his little people should snatch me up and carry me off to that dreadful glen."

"Why dreadful, Kitty? Are you sorry?"

"Oh no—not sorry. But there is something unholy about all that happened there. If that well were like the other wells about, that the saints have blessed, there would have been little bits of ribbon and suchlike offerings on the bushes. There was nothing of that kind *there*. I know I wouldn't go back alone to that valley for a million pounds."

He rested one hand on the oars, and with the other reached over and took hers.

"But I hope neither you nor I, Kitty, will ever find ourselves there alone."

He rowed in to the little jetty, and then stepped ashore and assisted her to follow, on to the gray stones. The leave-taking was a long one; there were many assurances and asseverations, and a little hysterical crying on her part. But at last the final good-bye had to come; and he put a hand on each of her cheeks and held her head as though he would read to the bottom of those soft, beautiful, tear-bedimmed eyes.

"You will never forget—you cannot forget—what you promised me to-night, Kitty,

when our hands were clasped over the stream?"

"Is it likely?" she said, sobbing violently. "Is it likely I shall forget, any single day as long as I live?"

Then she went away alone, and he waited and watched the solitary slight little figure go along the moonlit road, and up to the house. There was a flutter of a white handkerchief; he returned that signal. He waited again; there was no sign. So he got into the boat again, and rowed silently away to Inisheen harbour, like one in a dream.

Only a moonlight night, and the parting of two lovers. And yet sometimes such things remain visible across the years.

CHAPTER II.

A HIGH CONCLAVE.

That was an eventful evening in the life of young Fitzgerald when he made his way, not without some inward tremor, to the Albany, in order to dine with Mr. Hilton Clarke. For not only was that high honour in store for him, but moreover this new friend, who had been exceedingly kind to him in many ways, had promised he should also meet Mr. Gifford, the editor of the *Liberal Review*. Imagine a boy-lieutenant just joined asked to dine with the Commander-in-Chief and his staff! Away in that provincial newspaper-office, Master Willie had been accustomed to regard the London *Liberal Review* as perhaps the wisest and most original and honest of modern journals; he had many a time clipped out its opinions and quoted them prominently in the *Cork*

Chronicle; he had even from week to week studied the way of writing that characterised its columns. And here he was to meet the editor in actual flesh and blood. To listen to the great critic and the great journalist at once! Moreover, he could not help suspecting that Hilton Clarke had arranged this meeting lest peradventure it might be of some service, near or remote, to the young aspirant. He did not know what he had done to deserve such kindness, such good fortune. How had it all come about? So far as he could see, merely through his happening to know what were the best salmon-flies for the Blackwater.

Of course he arrived too soon, and so had plenty of time to saunter up and down the echoing little thoroughfare and master the lettering and numbering of the buildings. But when, at last, he made his way up the stone staircase to the door on the first landing, and was met by a tall middle-aged woman with a foreign-looking cap on her head, who, speaking in broken English, showed him where to leave his hat and coat, and then

ushered him into an apartment the like of which he had never seen in his life before, he began to ask himself if he had not made a mistake. Perhaps he would again have demanded of the black-eyed, soft-voiced, grave person if Mr. Hilton Clarke lived there, but she had gone. However, it was clear that some one was going to dine in this room; for in the middle of it was a small square table very daintily laid out, and lit by a lamp with a pink and white porcelain shade that threw a soft rosy glow around. So at haphazard he sat down, and proceeded to gaze with a sort of awe at the wonderful chamber, the treasures in which, if he had known anything about them, he would have perceived to have come from all parts of the world, but mostly from Venice. From Venice had come the row of lustrous copper water-vessels that had been transformed into big flower-pots and ranged along there on the little balcony outside the French windows; also the quaint and delicate white-and-gold chairs and couches that were now dim with-age; and perhaps, too, the framed chalice-

cloth over the chimney-piece, the beautiful rich embroidery of which appeared to be falling away, by its own weight, from the frail silken ground. But there was a large inlaid Spanish cabinet in scarlet and lacquered brass that was itself a blaze of colour; and there were Kairwan rugs scattered about the floor; and on the walls were gorgeous masses of Turkish embroidery; likewise a series of candles in sconces, over each of which was hung a piece of Hispano-Moresque pottery, the red glow from these large dishes completing the barbaric splendour of the place. For the rest, there was a good deal of Moorish metal- and ivory-work about; but there was not a picture nor an engraving on the walls, nor a book nor a newspaper anywhere.

Presently a door opened, and Hilton Clarke appeared.

"How are you, Fitzgerald? Glad to see you."

There was a moment's pause.

"Oh, will you excuse me for a second?"

As he disappeared into the bedroom again, a mighty qualm shot to the heart of young

Fitzgerald. His host was in evening dress. He glanced at the table, which was laid out for four; no doubt the other two guests would be in evening dress also! The mere thought of it was agony. It was not that they might consider him a country bumpkin; it was that they might think him failing in due respect to themselves. He had had no idea that London men of letters lived like this. Even if he had brought his rusty old suit of evening dress from Ireland, he would probably never have thought of putting it on to go to dinner at a bachelor's rooms. He wished himself a hundred miles away from the place. He ought never to have accepted an invitation to meet great people, until he had himself done something. It served him right for his presumption. And would they think it was out of disrespect? Would it be better for him to explain and apologise? Or to make some excuse now, and get rapidly away?

In a very few minutes his host appeared again—in morning costume.

"I think you're right, Fitzgerald," he said,

carelessly, as he flung himself into an easy-chair. "A shooting-coat will be more comfortable; it's got quite chilly to-night."

Fitzgerald's heart leapt up with gratitude. Was not this, he asked himself, the action of a true gentleman—an action prompted by an instinctive courtesy quick to take into consideration the feelings of others? He was half-inclined to be angry with Kitty—poor Kitty, who was so far away! But he would write to her: he would challenge her to say whether this little bit of courtesy, trifling as it might appear, was not a safe indication of character.

And it must be confessed that Kitty was quite wilfully wrong when she refused to perceive that her lover's new acquaintance was handsome, and even distinguished-looking. He was a man of about thirty, tall, sparely-built; his head well set on square shoulders, his features refined and pensive somewhat, with eyes of a clear light blue and calm and contemplative; blond hair and beard (which he wore somewhat long), and hands of extreme whiteness and elegance.

His beautifully-shaped nails, indeed, occupied a good deal of his attention; and as he now lay back in the easy-chair he was contemplating them rather than the young man he was addressing.

"There are some pretty things in the room, aren't there?" he said in a tone of indifference, though he still regarded his nails with care. "They are a bit too violent in colour for me. I like repose in a room. But the capitalist will be impressed."

"I beg your pardon?" said Fitzgerald (how glad he was about that business of the shooting-coat!).

"Oh," he continued, in the same indifferent kind of way, "I forgot I hadn't told you. There's a man coming here to-night who has too much money. It isn't right for a man to have so much money. I think I can induce him to risk a little of it in a journalistic venture—I think so; I don't know; the thing looks to me promising enough. Only I thought my capitalist would be impressed with a little grandeur; and so I rented these rooms for a time. I don't

want you to think that all that scarlet and red pottery kind of thing is what I should prefer. I like repose in a room, as I say; something to quiet the eyes when you are tired. Then the other man you will meet—oh, I told you—Gifford. What a comical old cock he is!".

Fitzgerald could scarce credit his ears. The editor of the *Liberal Review* to be spoken of in this familiar and patronising way!

"The odd thing is," continued Hilton Clarke, as he slowly opened and shut a pencil-case with his beautiful long nails, "that he has been able to get round about him a lot of writers who are exactly like himself, or who pretend to be. They are all fearfully in earnest; and dogmatic about trifles; making the most profound discoveries in new poets, new actresses, new politicians; always professing to be exceedingly accurate, and never able to quote three figures without a blunder. The whole thing is comical; but the public believe them to be so sincere. To me they seem to be continually wander-

ing in a fog; and one stumbles against a lamp-post, and shrieks out: 'My gracious goodness, if this isn't the greatest genius of a poet since the time of Byron!' and another tumbles on to the pavement, where a beggar has been drawing chalk pictures, and there's a wild cry from him too: 'Heaven preserve my poor senses if this isn't Carpaccio come back again. How can I express my emotion but in tears!' I am told Gifford's last theory is that political disturbances have the same origin as terrestrial disturbances; the earth suffering from a surfeit of electricity, don't you know, or some such thing, and firing off one-half of it as an earthquake at Valparaiso, and the other half of it, at the same moment, as an insurrection among the Poles. Different forms of gas, I suppose. I wonder, when a number of the *Liberal Review* is published here, what portentous explosion takes place at the other side of the world. But there's one good point about old Gifford; he is always very frank in apologising for his blunders. You generally find him saying, 'Last week we inadvertently mentioned

Lord Russell as having been principally concerned in the Abolition of the Corn Laws. Of course every one must have seen that we meant the Duke of Wellington.' And then the following week, 'We last week, by a slip of the pen, attributed the establishment of Free Trade to the Duke of Wellington; every one must have seen that we meant Sir Robert Peel.' I only hope he'll take it into his head to discover a mare's nest in this new weekly I am thinking of, and give us a flaming article about it; it's all a toss up whether he does or not."

Fitzgerald heard all this with dismay; and even with a trifle of pain. He was a born hero-worshipper; and for this unknown editor, whose opinions he had reverenced for many a year, he had a very high regard indeed. It was almost shocking to hear him spoken of as a comical person. But the truth was that Fitzgerald did not understand that there was a spice of revenge in this tirade uttered so negligently. Only that morning it had happened that a good-natured friend had repeated to Mr. Hilton Clarke

something that had been said of him by Mr. Gifford. The good-natured friend did not in the least mean to make mischief; it was only a little joke; and indeed there was nothing very terrible in what Mr. Gifford had said. "Clarke? Hilton Clarke, do you mean? Oh, he is the sort of man who writes triolets, parts his hair down the middle, and belongs to the Savile Club." Now there is no one of these things absolutely criminal; in fact, a man might commit them all and still be recognised as an honest British citizen. Only, Mr. Hilton Clarke did not like to be ticketed and passed on in that way; and so he took his earliest opportunity of revenge.

He looked at his watch.

"Five minutes past eight," he said. "Twenty minutes late already. I never wait more than a quarter of an hour for anybody; so we will have dinner. Fiammetta! Hola! —Fiammetta!"

There was no answer, so he touched a little silver-handled bell near him; and the tall dark-eyed woman—she seemed to have

been very beautiful at one time, Fitzgerald thought, as he now had a better look at her —made her appearance.

"L'on n'arrive pas; faîtes servir."

"Bien, m'sieur."

But at the same moment there was a noise outside in the passage; and very shortly afterwards Fiammetta ushered in two gentlemen. The first, who was rubbing his hands, and looking very cheerful, was a portly, rubicund, blond person, whose short yellow moustache and whiskers looked almost white as contrasted with his round, red, shining face; he wore one blazing diamond as a stud; and his boots shone almost as brilliantly as the diamond did. Him Fitzgerald instantly dismissed as of no account, and concentrated his eager interest on the next comer, who was certainly of more striking appearance. He was a man of middle height, of powerful build; his face sallow; his hair jet black and unkempt; his features strong, and yet keen and intellectual; his eyes so very clear, in the midst of a dark face, that they resembled the eyes of a lion. The general impression

you would have gathered from his look was that he was an intellectually powerful man, but unduly aggressive; though this impression was modified by his voice, which was pleasant, and by his laugh, which was delightful.

After the usual apologies and introductions, and when Hilton Clarke had expressed his regret that these two guests should have taken the trouble to come in evening dress (if Kitty had only seen how nicely that was done!) they sat down to the little square table; and Fiammetta, having handed round a dish containing caviare, olives stuffed with sardines, and similar condiments, offered to each of the guests his choice of liqueurs. As Fitzgerald had never heard any of the names before—and as he was far more interested in his companions than in the ministrations of the soft-eyed and velvet-footed Fiammetta—he absently answered "Yes, if you please," and did not even look at the reddish-coloured fluid that was poured into his glass. A minute afterwards he was brought to his senses. Having observed the results of certain Coursing Club dinners

at Inisheen, he had long ago vowed to himself never to touch spirits of any kind; and he had faithfully kept his vow. But he never imagined that this reddish fluid could be anything else than wine; and not particularly liking the oily taste of the caviare, he thought he would remove it by drinking this glass. The next moment he was convinced that the roof of his head was off, and his throat on fire. He hastily gulped down some water; fortunately he did not choke; no one noticed; and by-and-by, somewhat panting, and very red in the face, he was enabled to resume his attitude of respectful and eager attention.

The conversation was entirely confined to Hilton Clarke and Mr. Gifford; Mr. Scobell, the capitalist, being a most valiant trencher-man, minded his own business. And indeed for some time the remarks on affairs of the day and on the doings of public men were somewhat obvious and commonplace, if one may dare to say so; although here and there occurred a suggestion that these two men had very different ways of

looking at things. However, all the assertion was on the side of Mr. Gifford, whenever any disputable subject was approached. His host did not care to contradict. He would rather make some little facetious remark, or shrug his shoulders. Gifford's attitude was one of conviction and insistence; Clarke's might have been summed up in the word "*connu*." When the leonine gentleman was vehemently declaring that the laureate's last volume, which had been published that very week, was a masterpiece; that never before had he written anything so consistently dramatic in its conception, so musical in its lyrics, so pathetic in its tragedy; and that in consequence life seemed to have had something added to it within these last few days, his host remarked—while carefully looking for bones in the red mullet—"Oh, yes, it is a pleasant sort of poem."

But, by dire mishap, they blundered into the American Civil War, which was then a topic of more recent interest than it is now. At first the remarks were only casual, and perhaps also not profoundly novel.

"At all events," said Hilton Clarke at last, "there is one point on which everybody is agreed—that the Southerners have the advantage of being gentlemen."

"The gentlemen of the Salisbury stockade—the gentlemen of Andersonville!" retorted his opponent, with a flash in the deep-set gray eyes.

"And they fought gallantly, too, until they were beaten back by the undisciplined crowds that poured down on them—flung at them, indeed, by reckless generals, who knew no more of the art of war than they did of common humanity. Of course, if you have every advantage of men and money and war-material——"

But this was like the letting in of waters. Even Mr. Scobell looked up. For the *Liberal Review* had been a warm partisan of the North during the war; and Mr. Gifford had written nearly all of the war articles himself, so that his information, whether precisely accurate or not, was of mighty volume, and down it came on the head of his opponent like a cataract. All the campaigns had to be

fought over again: now they were investing Vicksburg; now they were marching through Georgia; now they were at Five Forks. Hilton Clarke appeared to have gone away somewhere; he was scarcely heard amid all this thunder. At times, it is true, he would utter some scornful taunt, not levelled at the North only, but at North and South combined; for indeed he might well be confused by all the gunpowder smoke and noise. But even here he was not safe; for, having incidentally remarked that it was not worth disputing about, "for after all," he said, "there are only two kinds of Americans, plain and coloured, and for my part I prefer the coloured variety," he was immediately pursued by his relentless enemy, who upbraided him for making use of those idle little quips and taunts that made such mischief between countries. The flippant article was very easy to write, and the writer pocketed his three guineas; and then it went out and was quoted all over America as an expression of English jealousy. He undertook to say that Clarke had never been in America; he undertook to

say that he had never known twenty Americans in the whole course of his life——

Now there is no saying how far this discussion might have gone, or how fierce it might have become; but Mr. Scobell made a remark. And when a capitalist speaks, literary persons are silent.

"I was once in America," he said.

There was a pause.

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Gifford, regarding him with interest.

"Yes?" said his host, with a pleasant and inquiring smile.

But it appeared that that was all. He had contributed his share to the conversation; and accordingly he returned to his plate. Moreover, what he had contributed was valuable: it was actual fact, which there was no gainsaying.

But whatever interest this dispute may have had for young Fitzgerald as indicative of the characters of the disputants (that is to say, supposing him to have had the audacity to attempt to take the measure of two such distinguished men) what followed turned out

to have a far more immediate and personal importance for him. The champagne, which had been rather long in coming, had now been passed round twice by the soft-footed Fiammetta; a mellower atmosphere pervaded the room; Mr. Gifford was laughing pleasantly at a little joke of his host's; and the round, clear, staring eyes of the capitalist—whose face, by the way, had grown even a little redder, so that the short yellow-white whiskers, and moustache, and eyebrows looked as if they were afire—beamed in the most benign manner on all and sundry. This was the time chosen by Mr. Hilton Clarke to unfold the journalistic scheme which had been the *fons et origo* of this little dinner-party.

"You see, I want your advice, Gifford," he said, "and Mr. Scobell won't mind my repeating some details that he and I have gone over together. What I propose is a shilling weekly—addressed to the wealthier classes, of course, but rather with a view to country houses. However, I should publish at three o'clock on Saturday, so that London

people could have the magazine by post, while the country people would get it in their Sunday morning bag. There might be a summary of Reuter's telegrams up to the latest hour on Saturday; otherwise, no news; and above all no politics. The prominence given to politics in English newspapers is founded on a delusion—wait a minute, Gifford; let me have my scheme out. I say that the space given to politics in the newspapers is out of all proportion to the interest taken in politics by any ordinary English household. Outside political circles—I mean, apart from those who are actually concerned in politics or in writing about them—take any household you like, and for one who is deeply interested in politics you will find four who don't care a brass farthing about them. Well, I propose to address the four. But even the fifth, mind you, though he may imagine himself responsible for the Empire, might have anxious thoughts as to whether he should take such and such a deer-forest in Scotland for the autumn, or whether he should hire a steam-yacht and take his family for a cruise

about the Channel Islands, or whether supposing he took such and such a country-house from October till Christmas, there would be as many pheasants this year as figured in last year's bag, and so on; and he might be very glad, on the Sunday morning, to sit down with his after-breakfast cigar, in the verandah, you know, and study this honest shilling counsellor——"

"Oh," said Gifford. "That kind of thing. But there is the *Field;* there is *Land and Water*——"

"Pardon me, this will be quite different," said Hilton Clarke, composedly. "I propose to have a series of agents—yachting men, sportsmen, anglers, and all the rest of it—who will at their leisure send in faithful and unadorned descriptions of anything they find that is worth having; so that Paterfamilias, instead of reading advertisements that he can't believe, will have a lot of things offered to him—a brace of perfectly disciplined setters, a thoroughbred hunter, half a mile of salmon-fishing in Ireland, a shooting-box in the Highlands, anything, in short, connected

with those delightful dreams of holidays that fill up the idle time on Sundays with so many folk—and he will know that he can safely depend on these being as they are described. In fact, I don't know that we might not have a number of supernumerary agents; so that a man, writing to the office, could have one of these sent on commission, and so make sure, for example, that the fine bag he had heard of as having been made last year on a particular shooting did not mean that the outgoing tenant had cleared every head of game off the place. The difficulty will be to get perfectly trustworthy agents; *we* shall be above suspicion; for we shall take no fees, no commissions. The men must be well paid——"

"Right," said Mr. Scobell, and there was instant attention. But that was all. He looked from one to the other in silence; he had said all he had thought it necessary to say.

"My dear Gifford, not an ortolan?" Hilton Clarke observed with calm surprise. "Fitzgerald, pass the Burgundy—gently, man!"

he added, in a tone of displeasure, for Fitzgerald had gripped the basket with his muscular fingers as if it were the stock of a breechloader. "And for this section," he continued, "of course what is wanted is a good sub-editor, who will put the reports into decent English, and who won't let the printers make a fool of us. Besides, he must know something of out-of-door sports—he must know a good deal more than *I* do—or we shall be made ridiculous. I think it was rather lucky, then, that I ran against my friend Fitzgerald here, for if you can persuade him, Mr. Scobell, to take the place, he is the very man for it. He has burned powder in those desolate Irish bogs, and I know he can dress a fly. And then, you see, Fitzgerald, it needn't take up anything like the whole of your time. You might be going on with more purely literary work quite independently of it. What do you say?—or would you rather consider?"

"Oh, I should be very glad," stammered Fitzgerald, with his face about as red as Mr. Scobell's. "It is very kind of you—I—I

don't know whether I could do the work—but I should try my best, anyway——"

"Oh, that's all right," said Hilton Clarke, coolly. "I daresay you know more about it than I do. As to terms, perhaps this isn't the place to discuss these details——"

But here Mr. Scobell broke in. Here he had a right to speak; and here he was on solid ground.

"I leave that in your hands, Clarke. I leave that to you entirely. I want the paper well done. I want it to be a gentlemanly paper. I don't want to go into my Club and have a man come up to me and say 'Scobell, what d—d Radical trash that is in your paper. I wonder you'd own a d—d Radical paper.' I want it to be a gentlemanly paper: and I am willing to pay for it. I want it to be well-printed, on good paper; I want it to be a gentlemanly-looking paper; I don't want when I go into sassiety, to have people speaking of me as the owner of a d—d Radical print."

"Oh, of course not—of course not," said Hilton Clarke, somewhat hastily. "There

will be no politics. But we must have a name. I have bothered my head for the last fortnight about it. You see, I must have it known that the paper is for Sunday morning, or for Sunday; but everything I have tried suggests the *Sunday at Home* or the *Day of Rest*, or something like that. I thought of the *Sunday Morning Cigar;* but then everybody doesn't smoke. The *After-Breakfast Cigar*, a *Sunday Paper;* that has the same objection. The *Country Gentleman's Guide;* that is too long; besides, I want to appeal to the whole household; and to town households also. Well, we must consider that by-and-by."

"If I were you, I would call it *Jeshurun*," said Mr. Gifford. "It seems to me you are addressing those who have waxed fat; and taking account only of the most material and vulgar luxuries. There is not a word of any intellectual requirements——"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," his host said. "I have only described one section to you. I mean to take the literary section under my own care. Of course we shall have essays,

touching here and there on sport, perhaps; but also meant to have an interest for the ladies in the house. A short story now and again, if possible; but it is difficult to get them good; it might be better to have some French novel—such as *Monsieur de Camors*—translated, and use that as a serial. An occasional bit of verse, too, or a *ballade*, touching affairs of the day. Professor Jewel has offered me a series of translations from Horace partly adapted to modern affairs; but I am afraid that has been done too often."

"Don't touch them," said Gifford, with decision. "Horace is as fatal to translators as Heine. Both are quite unmanageable. Look how Milton made a fool of himself with the fifth Ode."

"What?" said Mr. Scobell, in a loud voice; and even Fitzgerald stared.

"Come, you must not speak slightingly of the equator," Hilton Clarke said, with a laugh.

"Oh, but I do say it is the very worst translation ever made from Horace, or from anybody else," Mr. Gifford insisted. "It is

not a question of degree. I say it is the very worst translation ever made from anything; for it starts with the primary defect of being absolutely unintelligible. Do you mean to tell me that anybody unacquainted with the original could make the slightest sense out of it—

> 'Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold;
> Who always vacant, always amiable,
> Hopes thee, of flattering gales
> Unmindful!'

Gracious heavens! And then the measure—

> 'Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold!'

I should like to see a schoolboy try to make that scan; to say nothing of 'credulous, all gold' certainly leaving in the mind the impression that, if anybody is all gold, it is not Pyrrha at all but the credulous youth. Now the gentleman who translated Gretchen's song thus:—

> 'My peace is gone,
> My heart is sore,
> I find him never
> And nevermore,'

erred in the other direction, for he wanted

to make it quite clear what poor Gretchen was sorrowing about, and only took a liberty with a little *sie*."

"But what do you think of this project now, Gifford?" said Hilton Clarke, as he handed round cigars, coffee being on the table.

Mr. Gifford took a cigar, lay back in his chair, and passed his hand through the thick masses of his raven-black hair.

"Not much," said he, firmly. "You are combining opposed tastes. Sportsmen are not as a rule fond of intellectual pursuits. Where you find the library in a country-house turned into a gunroom, there will be more newly-made cartridges than newly-published books about. A combination of Colonel Hawker and Joseph Addison——"

"But, my dear fellow, you don't seem to see that I am addressing different persons. I am addressing the whole household—the father who wants to invite Lord Somebody or other to shoot with him over a thoroughly well-preserved moor in Scotland; the eldest son who hunts; the younger son, who wants

to cut a dash at Cowes; the mamma who has her eye on several parties she could make up if only she had a pleasant country-house for the winter; the young ladies who would be curious about a translated French novel, as they are forbidden to read such things in the original. You see I am appealing to the whole household——"

"Call it the *Household Magazine*, then," said Gifford, with a laugh.

"I will. Thanks," said Hilton Clarke, calmly, as he took out a beautifully-bound little note-book. "At least that is better than anything I have thought of as yet."

And so Master Willie was installed as the sub-editor of a shilling weekly magazine. But that was not the only event of the evening, so far as concerned himself. After talking about many things, until the gorgeous colours of the chamber were pretty well subdued by a haze of pale blue tobacco smoke, they chanced to touch on a novel which had just then been published by a gentleman holding a subordinate place in Her Majesty's Government. Rather, it had been published

some weeks before, anonymously; and no notice had been taken of it: now, however, a second edition was announced, with the name of the Right Honourable Spencer Tollemache, M.P., on the title-page. Then editors had to begin and overhaul the piles of books put aside as adjudged not worth a review, and so "Daphne's Shadow" came to the front again.

"Curious idea for Spencer Tollemache to write a novel," said Hilton Clarke. "His 'History of the '32 Reform Bill' was very well spoken of."

"Ah; light literature—relaxation—relaxation," said Mr. Scobell, smiling blandly,—"relaxation from the cares of state."

Gifford darted an almost angry glance at him.

"Light literature?" he said, somewhat too scornfully. "I suppose you mean light literature as distinguished from the heavy literature that sinks? My dear Mr. Scobell, where are the politicians of the time of Homer? Where are the learned treatises *they* wrote? It seems to me that light litera-

ture—imaginative literature—pure story-telling—absolute fiction—is the only really permanent thing of man's invention in the world. The Siege of Troy, the Wanderings of Ulysses, the Arabian Nights, Shakespere's plays, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe, the Vicar of Wakefield—more than that, the children's fairy tales that have an antiquity beyond anything that can be guessed at—all pure fiction—these are the things that remain; these are the things that the whole world treasures; while your heavy literature sinks into the bog."

He was quite as vehement about this chance topic as he had been about the American War.

"You may call them will-o'-the-wisps, if you like; they are not to be caught and cooked; but they remain to delight the curiosity and imagination of men, flickering and beautiful; while far more useful works—solid and substantial works—have gone down into the morass and the centuries have closed over them. People see too much of the meaner side of what is around them; they

wish to hear of nobler things; they like a touch of rose-colour, of the wonderful, the supernatural—added to the common things of life. If a child had never been told about fairies, it would invent fairies. And you talk of Spencer Tollemache as turning to this kind of work for relaxation? Perhaps he may. I never read his History of the Reform Bill; but if he thinks it easier to create imaginary human beings and give them definite and natural form, and make them the brothers and sisters and intimate friends of the people who are actually alive in the world, if he thinks it is easier to do that than to go to Parliamentary reports and Blue-books and get together a useful compilation of easily-ascertained facts, then perhaps he may find himself mistaken. Perhaps he has already found himself mistaken. By Jove, it's eleven o'clock."

Good luck seemed to pursue Fitzgerald this evening. When Mr. Scobell drove away in his carriage, the remaining two guests left together on foot; and as they walked along Piccadilly, Mr. Gifford must

needs continue talking about the Under Secretary's novel and the capitalist's chance remark. You may imagine that young Fitzgerald was in no hurry to interrupt him. To be walking with Mr. Gifford was a sufficient honour; to listen to this vehement, combative, and occasionally brilliant and incisive talk was something that the provincial subeditor had never dared to hope for in this world. They walked all the way to Sloane Street (Master Willie would have kept on to Jerusalem, had not his companion stopped), when Mr. Gifford said to him—

"You live in the Fulham Road, you said? My rooms are close by here. I have been thinking now that if you didn't mind trying your hand at a review of that novel I was speaking of, you might let me have it by Thursday night. Hilton Clarke showed me some things of yours. You are on the right road; don't fall in with that affected indifferentism; you'll find too much of it in London. Remember Bishop Blougram:

> 'What can I gain on the denying side?
> Ice makes no conflagration.'

Your writing isn't quite clean enough yet. You go round about. You don't hit the nail sharp and have done. No matter; if you like to try your hand, you may have the book."

"But—" said Fitzgerald, almost deprived of breath, "—but you don't mean for the *Liberal Review?*"

"Of course I do."

Now if at this moment the pavement at the corner of Sloane Street had opened, and if Master Willie had beheld there a subterranean procession of Don Fierna and all his array of elves—passing along in blue fire through grottoes of felspar gemmed with rubies and diamonds—he could not have been more astounded. That he should be asked to write for the *Liberal Review;* and to write about a book, too, that was at the moment occupying so much of the attention of the public! He could scarcely find words to express his sense of his companion's great kindness, and of his own fears about his being unable to undertake such a task.

"But I don't say I will use the article,

mind," said Mr. Gifford, good-naturedly. "I will give you the chance, if you will take the risk. It may be some training for you, in any case. If you call or send to the office to-morrow you will find the book waiting for you. Good-night. Glad to have met you."

* * * *

Was Kitty awake yet? Could she hear the news? Could she tell how high his heart was beating?—poor Kitty, who was so far away at Inisheen!

CHAPTER III.

A FIRST CAST.

FITZGERALD did not get to sleep soon that night. As he walked rapidly away down the Fulham Road it seemed to him as if five-and-thirty different ways of beginning this fateful review were pressing in on his mind, and that he had lost all power to decide which was preferable. If he could have seen but the first page of the novel, it might have given him some clue, perhaps. But here he was eagerly and anxiously sketching out plans for reviewing a book of the contents of which he was wholly ignorant; and it appeared to him as if his brain had got the better of him altogether and was running ahead in this aimless, distracted, and fruitless fashion quite independently of his control.

At length he reached a dimly-lit little courtyard in the Fulham Road, on one side

of which stood a plain two-storied building. The ground-floor consisted of a large studio; the upper floor served as a bedroom, and that Fitzgerald had secured as his lodging. He went carefully up the outside stair; unlocked the door; lit a match and then a lamp; and here he was in the middle of a fairly large low-roofed apartment, somewhat scantily furnished, but quite sufficiently so for all his wants. The floor was for the most part bare: and here and there was a bit of faded Turkey carpet or a withered old rug which had most likely been flung out from the studio below as being even too worn and decayed for painting purposes.

It was a fine place to think in, for there were few temptations in the way of luxury about; and he had plenty to think of. The projected magazine; Kitty's surprise on hearing the good news; the wonderful evening he had just spent, and the strange contrast between the two great men; nay, precise conversation of which he could remember every word—all these things were enough to occupy him; but nearer than any of them

came this pressing matter of the review. What a chance it was! And they said that London was an unfriendly city! Now it could not be any interest in salmon-flies that had led Mr. Gifford to place this opportunity before one who was quite unknown to him. True, Mr. Gifford had seen certain excerpts from the *Cork Chronicle* which Mr. Hilton Clarke had asked to be entrusted with (*N.B.* What would Kitty say to this? Was not that the act of a friend?), but Fitzgerald had a great distrust of himself; he had not regarded these things as of much value; and certainly he had never thought they would entitle him to have the chance given him of contributing to the *Liberal Review*.

At this moment all his thinking went clean out of his head; for there was a tremendous noise below—the noise of a powerful raucous bass voice that bellowed, or rather that rattled with the rattle of small drums—

"*Should auld acquaintance be forrrrr-got.*"

"There's that brute begun again," said Fitzgerald to himself, with a groan.

But the brute, whoever he was, seemed

to have no intention of continuing the song. There was a dead silence, in the course of which Fitzgerald speedily recovered his thoughts again.

And first of all he was determined that, if the book gave him any fair excuse, the review should be a friendly and good-natured one. For he had carefully noted certain remarks (what had he not carefully noted during that momentous evening?) that Mr. Gifford had addressed to Hilton Clarke with regard to the projected magazine.

"For one thing, my friend," Mr. Gifford had said, bending his keen eyes on the tall blond-bearded gentleman opposite him, "I would advise you, in going over to this new thing, to leave behind you the affected pessimism of the *Weekly Gazette*" (this was a weekly journal to which Mr. Hilton Clarke was understood to contribute). "That continual belittling of things; that continual discontent with everything that turns up in politics or literature or art, does not pay. It is not wise. When the public find you always discontented, always looking at the

hopeless side of things, always declaring that everything is going to the bad, they begin to suspect that you have reason for this discontent—in other words, that your circulation is decreasing. Now that is a fatal impression. Besides people will not read a paper that fills them with gloom. Nor can you bully the public with impunity. It is no use attacking them, and scolding them, or treating them with scorn and contempt. You see, the public have simply to leave you unread, and that is a terrible business; for then, you perceive, you cannot hurt them, but they do hurt you."

"I should have thought," said Hilton Clarke, with a gentle smile, "that the circulation of the *Weekly Gazette* was somewhat bigger, a little bit bigger, than that of the *Liberal Review*."

"Yes; no doubt, no doubt," said the other, cheerfully, "though I am in hopes of seeing their relative positions reversed some day. But that is my advice to you. That tone of disappointment with everything makes people begin to think that you are not getting on

as well as you might be; and that is very bad. Then the advertisers. Mind you, the advertisers are also vertebrate animals, and they make up a considerable proportion of the public. And if you go on from week to week declaring that British tradesmen are universally swindlers, that railway directors should be indicted for wilful murder, and so forth, mind you, your advertising agent may have a bad time of it. Say he goes into a big cutlery place in Oxford Street. The foreman goes up to the master, 'Here is the advertisement man from the *Weekly Gazette*, sir; he wants us to take the outside page next week.' Then very likely the cutler may turn round and say, 'The *Weekly Gazette* be hanged! Tell him that swindling isn't paying well just now, and we can't advertise. Swindlers, indeed! Swindlers themselves! The *Weekly Gazette* be hanged!'"

Now this advice, though it seemed to young Fitzgerald at the time to be not quite in accordance with the *ruat cœlum* principles professed by the *Liberal Review* (which was a very courageous, and vehement, and plain-

spoken organ), nevertheless appeared to him to be sound and sensible. Accordingly he now resolved that, if the merits of the book permitted it at all, he would treat it in the most friendly fashion. Instead of scourging him with rods from out the groves of Academe, the *Liberal Review* would take this new disciple by the hand and encourage him, and bid him be of good cheer. Or what, if the book were very good indeed, and altogether beyond need of patronage? Then let literature be congratulated on this new adhesion! Fitzgerald remembered that the *Liberal Review* was rather fond of making discoveries. No reviews of the book, at least of any importance, had appeared, though people were talking enough about it. Might not he be the first to announce the advent of a new power in literature? If he only had the book—here—at once—

"And never brought to mind?"

—again came the giant roar from below. And what a tenacious memory the musician must have, was Fitzgerald's first thought;

ten minutes certainly having elapsed since he sung the first line. And surely there must be some shaft or opening in the floor, otherwise the sound could not come through in such volume? And what if perchance that shaft should be over the musician's head, on which a bucket of water might be made to descend suddenly at the next bellow?

But there was to be no more bellowing—except, indeed, a verse of the National Anthem, which Fitzgerald had already learned to recognise as the token that the artist was about to retire for the night, pleased or not, as the case might be, with his work. "*Go-o-o-d sa-ave the Qu-e-e-n!*" roared the deep bass voice in dying cadence: then there was a curious clamping and shuffling, as if some one were doing a heel-and-toe step on a wooden floor; then silence. Either the artist was having a final pipe, or he had gone to bed.

Next morning eleven o'clock was the earliest hour at which Fitzgerald deemed it fitting he should go to the office of the *Liberal Review* for the book; and even then he did

not think it probable that Mr. Gifford could have sent a message so soon. To his surprise, however, there the precious parcel was awaiting him; and so eager was he to see what sort of material this was on which he was to operate, that the moment he got on the top of the first passing Fulham omnibus he hastily undid the parcel, put two volumes in his pocket, and proceeded to cut the leaves of the other. He glanced over the first page or two—very good; a sort of playful introduction; light, facetious, well-written; in short, a clever little essay about a country-house and its guests in the hunting season. But the reviewer was more anxious to get to the people; and these turned out to be, in the first instance, the three daughters of a Duchess, who were at the same moment in their respective dressing-rooms and each imparting confidences to her maid. It was ingeniously arranged that these confidences should be reported in turn; and there was a very comical similarity among them, seeing that they all referred to a youthful marquis of vast possessions who was to arrive at the

house that evening, and to the probable effect on him of certain costumes and styles of dressing the hair.

Now Fitzgerald knew a great deal more about the habits of a "stand" of golden plover than about the ways and speech of Duchess's daughters; but he soon began to form the impression, and much to his disappointment, that all this artificial talk, clever as it might be, was entirely impossible in the circumstances. Nay, he began to feel just a touch of resentment that three young Englishwomen of good birth and breeding should have been represented as exhibiting themselves, to their own domestics, as so many flippant and giggling barmaids. It is true that Fitzgerald's father kept a small country hotel (and even that he did unsuccessfully), but the Fitzgeralds of Inisheen were an old family, and had always been held of consequence in that part of Ireland; Master Willie had been accustomed all his life to be addressed as "yer honour" when out over bog and hill in search of game; and was himself possessed of not a little faith in the virtues of

lineage and good blood. And was it possible, he almost indignantly asked himself, that any three young Englishwomen of decent parentage and education—putting the Duchess out of the question altogether—should have so little self-respect as to make confidantes of their maids in this fashion, and reveal their mean little schemes with the pertness of a soubrette in a fifth-rate farce?

He passed on, however, in hope. The marquis arrives just in time to be sent off to dress for dinner. Then the people of the neighbourhood who are coming to dine were introduced; and here there was some very fair humorous sketching of a light kind; Fitzgerald marking down one or two passages for approval. He read on and on—until he arrived at the courtyard. He read on and on (not so hopeful now) while his landlady brought him a chop, some bread, and a glass of ale, his mid-day meal. He scarcely paid heed to these things so busy was he with this book—so anxious to make something out of it—so disappointed at finding, with all the occasional smartness, the characters not flesh

and blood creatures at all, but mere ghosts. The dry bones would not live. By four o'clock he had finished the book; and he laid it down with a sigh.

Yet out of it he had to make an article somehow; more than that, he was determined to have it done that very night, so that the editor of the *Liberal Review* should see that he could do his work promptly. So he set to work forthwith; and laboured and laboured away to make something out of the dry husks. Fortunately the bellowing gentleman beneath was absent; and he could work on in silence. The hours passed; he had a cup of tea. Finally, after much correction and re-writing he had a piece of work put together which, if it did not form a highly interesting article, was, he thought, as fair a judgment of the book as he could give.

Just then, it being nearly nine o'clock, the last post brought him a letter, which he eagerly seized, for, though he had heard from Kitty that morning, might she not have taken it into her head—at the suggestion of her tender heart—to send him another little note

by some strange means? But this turned out to be from his father.

"My dear Willie — That blackguard Maloney, the devil sweep him, won't renew the bill I told you of, and he's going to put his low scoundrel of a brother on to have the law of me if I don't have the £40 ready by Tuesday next. I have tried to raise the money, but devil the penny can I get of it. Have you any money you could spare? 'Tis a mean trick of Maloney's; sure many's the time I've helped his old grandfather when he hadn't as much clothes on his back as would have lifted the kettle from the fire. Bad luck to him, 'tis all because my Marshal Mac-Mahon beat his old scarecrow of a Galloper at Drimoleague.

"Your affectionate father,

"Edward Fitzgerald."

Master Willie had arrived in London with £38 in his pocket; and that was the total of his worldly wealth. Had this letter come at any other moment it is possible he might have thought it hard he should have to part

with that sum, or rather the greater part of it, to pay his father's Coursing Club debts. But what did he care for a few sovereigns when a fine career had just been opened before him, with no other than Kitty as the final crown and blushing and beautiful reward? Here was his first contribution to the *Liberal Review* ready to be deposited in the letter-box. To-morrow he was to see Mr. Hilton Clarke about the sub-editorship of the new magazine. And this morning what was the message, written in that sprawling but most lovable hand?—"O, Willie, darling, make haste and get on, and come back to me! And if your fine friend introduces you to any of the beautiful London ladies, 'just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland that is breaking her heart for your sake." No; it was not at such a moment he was going to consider the question of a few pounds.

So he wrote—

"My dear Father—I have altogether now £38, of which I send you £30, for I must keep a small margin. Then you can

bring[1] my gun to Lord Kinsale's new agent (I forget his name) who offered me £6 for it when he knew I was going away. The other £4 you will make up somehow; but don't sell old Bess; she and I may still live to have another turn at the snipe some day. I think I have a good prospect here; more particulars by-and-by.

"Your affectionate son,

"WILLIAM FITZGERALD."

That letter, of course, he could not send off just then; the money had to be made transferable first. But here was this other one for Mr. Gifford—which from time to time he regarded with a qualm of anxiety, not quite certain that, after all, he had done his best. However, he resolved that it was now too late for doubt; he took it up; sallied forth into the night; sought out the nearest pillar letter-box; and there deposited the fateful packet. That decisive step once taken, his heart felt somewhat lighter. The night was fine, and he went on aimlessly

[1] He meant "take." But Master Willie had not quite got rid of all his Irishisms, despite his study of the style of the *Liberal Review*.

wandering, along the gas-lit pavements; thinking of many things, but mostly of Inisheen, and perhaps most of all of an inland glen not far from there, and of running water, and of a certain moonlight night. Was not this Kitty's soft, low, trembling voice he could hear again in the silence?—"*My love I give to you; my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs.*" And perhaps she also—far away there beyond the sea, up in the little room overlooking the wide sands—was recalling these words at this moment; and perhaps also shivering a little as she thought of Don Fierna and his elves?

It was nearly twelve o'clock when he returned to the dim little courtyard; and he was very tired; and perhaps the loneliness of this great dark world of London was beginning to weigh on him; so that he was glad to think of his escape into the realms of sleep (where Kitty was sometimes found walking about, with her soft black eyes laughing, and her voice as glad as ever). But, as it turned out, his adventures for that night were not just yet over.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

FITZGERALD was just about to pass through the archway leading into the courtyard when he heard a sudden scuffling in front of him, and then a man's voice call out "Help! help! police!" Instinctively he paused, for he had no mind to enter into other people's squabbles; and besides he could not well see what was going on. But his appearance on the scene had no doubt produced some effect; for before he had time to think, a man dashed past him. Fitzgerald was in truth bewildered; he had been dreaming of Inisheen; not thinking of midnight robberies in London. And now he was inclined to let well alone, and thank God he was rid of a knave, when another dark figure dashed by —quite close by, indeed; and at the same moment he felt a sharp blow on his face.

This was too much. This brought him to his senses. He did not know exactly where he had been struck; but he knew that his face was tingling; he knew that he had a stout oak staff in his hand, with a formidable knob at the end of it; and the next thing he knew was that he was in full chase down the Fulham Road, with the most un-Christian-like determination to give as good as he had got, or even better.

The first man had disappeared, but this one was just ahead; and Fitzgerald was well aware that his only chance was to overtake the fellow before he could dodge into some byway or corner. Now the thief, or burglar, or whoever he was, ran very well; but his muscles had not had that training over rock and heather that his pursuer's had; and the consequence was, that in a very short space of time young Fitzgerald had so nearly overtaken his man (and was so fearful of letting him escape) that he aimed a blow at the back of the fellow's head with his stout oak staff. The next minute Master Willie had nearly fallen over the body of his prostrate foe;

for down he had come, after that sounding whack, prone on the pavement, where he lay without a sign of life.

Then a third man came rushing up; and Fitzgerald faced about, feeling now rather angry, and inclined to have it out with the rogues of London generally. But he instantly perceived that this little bare-headed, red-bearded man, who now came wildly along, was no other than an artist whom he had once or twice observed going into the studio below his bedroom.

"You've got him?" he called out, in great excitement; "you've got one o' them?"

"Yes, I've got him," answered Fitzgerald, "and now I've got him, I'd like to know what to do with him."

"The scoundrels!" said the other, breathlessly. "If ye hadna come up, they'd have taken every penny I had on me. Eh, man," he added, staring at his rescuer, "did he hit ye?—your face is a' bluidy."

Fitzgerald had indeed felt something warm and moist about his cheek and chin; and when he had put his handkerchief up to

his face he could see by the dim gaslight that he must have been bleeding pretty freely.

"Yes, he did; and I think I hit him too —unless he's shamming. You go and get a policeman; and I'll wait here by this fellow. If he becomes unruly I'll give him another taste of my *kipeen*."

The red-haired artist left rapidly, and in a few seconds returned not only with one, but two policemen whom he had found talking together, and into whose ears he was now pouring the whole story of how it had happened.

Just as they came up, the man on the pavement slowly raised himself on his knees, and began to rub the back of his head.

"Who done that?" he muttered, as if he were not quite awake.

Then he seemed to collect himself somewhat; he looked up and around; and perceiving the approaching policemen he uttered the one word "copped," and resigned himself to his fate.

"Why, it's the Cobbler as I'm alive," said one of the policemen, getting hold of him by

the shoulder, and turning the apathetic face round to the gaslight. "He's been wanted ever since that job in the Cromwell Road."

"Now, look here, my good fellow," said the Scotchman, "I'm going to pick up my hat; I'm no going to the station at this time o' night. Ye maun take my name and address, and I'll come in the morning, and prefer the charge——"

"That'll do, sir; there's more nor one job agin this man."

"Off to the station, then, wi' the scoundrel; and don't lose your grip of him. If you, sir," he said, turning to Fitzgerald, "will walk back as far as my studio, I will give you a basin of water to wash your face in—it's the only way I can thank ye."

"Oh, but we are neighbours," said Fitzgerald. "I know you well enough. You are the man who makes such a frightful row with your Scotch songs."

"Eh! how do you know that?" said the other, sharply.

"Because my room is just over your studio."

"Bless me!—then you are the man that goes tramping up and down all night—tramp, tramp—tramp, tramp—then five minutes' rest—then tramp, tramp—tramp, tramp—up and down—man, I've always pictured ye as a sort of Eugene Aram, wringing your hands: I felt sure ye had murdered somebody. Or a hyena in a cage. What do ye gang on in that way for?"

"It's a bad habit, that is all."

"But what's your business?" said the other, bluntly.

"I write for newspapers."

"I did not think that was such hard work. It must cost ye a lot in shoe-leather," said the Scotchman, drily. "However, when I've got my hat, ye maun come in and have a glass; I was just getting back to my supper, when they scoundrels grippet me. I wish I had a candle. I'm thinking the police, now we've handed over to them such a notorious creeminal, might give us another gas-lamp in this infernal dark yaird."

Without the aid of a candle, however, he soon picked up his hat; then he led the way

into a hollow-sounding and apparently spacious room; lit the gas, and forthwith proceeded to get his companion some fresh water with which to wash his face. And while Fitzgerald, who found that the bleeding had proceeded merely from the nose, and that he was not cut at all, was performing that operation, the Scotchman, with a smartness which showed that he was familiar with the exigencies of camping out, had lit a little gas-stove, produced some tinned meat, and put a quite snow-white table-cloth on a small table, with some glasses, plates, knives, and forks.

"Now we'll have a bit of supper, and a crack," said he, "since we're neighbours. Will I make ye a dish of hot soup?—Five minutes will do it."

"Oh no, thank you," said young Fitzgerald, who was much taken with the frankness of this short, broad-shouldered, red-bearded and keen-eyed person. "That tinned beef will do capitally for me. But what I should like better than anything," he said, casting his eyes round the big, gaunt, and dusty studio,

which had very little furniture beyond the heaps of canvases all ranged with their faces to the wall, "would be to have a look at your pictures."

"My pictures?" said the other. "Oh yes. As ye're a newspaper-man, ye're no likely to be a buyer."

"You would rather not show them to a buyer, then?"

"There is nothing in the wide world I hate so much,"—said the other, busying himself with the table,—"little experience as I have of it. I don't mind criticism—the sharper the more likely I am to get something out of it. But the valuation in money—that's what gangs against the grain. Come, sit down, man; ye're none the worse for the stroke on the nose. The water is near boiling already: and ye'll have a glass of toddy. Here's the bottle, and there's the sugar."

"Thank you; but I don't drink whiskey."

"Hwhat!" shouted the red-bearded artist, nearly letting the bottle fall. "Hwhat d'ye say?——"

"But I've got some beer overhead. I will fetch some in a minute——"

"Gude preserve us, laddie; but if it's ale ye want, there's a bottle or two in the corner. What's your name, by the way?"

"Fitzgerald."

"Mine's Ross. John Ross. Fall to, man; there's no use wasting time over meat when there's a pipe and a glass o' toddy to follow."

Fitzgerald soon found out that he was excessively hungry, and as the cold beef and the bottled ale were alike excellent, he did ample justice to both, while with equanimity he submitted to be examined, and cross-examined by this frankly downright acquaintance.

"You're one o' the lucky ones, I can see," said Ross, when Fitzgerald had told him how his literary prospects were. "Ye've fallen on your feet just at once. Here have I been in London near six years, and I havena sold as many pictures as I have sold in two seasons when I was pentin' in Perthshire in a caravan. But bless ye, what does it matter?" he continued with cheerful good-humour; "I have

all the more pictures to sell when I do fall on my feet. I envy nobody, so long as I can get a crust of bread, for I reckon on my time coming."

"Of course if you were to get into the Academy, your pictures would have a great additional value, I suppose," Fitzgerald observed.

"The Academy?" said John Ross, with a stare. "Do ye mean me becoming a member of the Academy?"

"Of course. Isn't that the natural ambition of every artist?" said his new acquaintance.

"Oh, but that's luck beyond anything I'm thinking of," said the other imperturbably, as he proceeded to pour out some scalding hot water on a couple of lumps of sugar. "Just think of all the men there are pentin', and the chances of any one of them getting such a stroke of luck as that. No, no; all I hope for is that they who are in the Academy would be a bit friendly. If there's any one bears them a grudge, it's no me; if the chance happened my way, wouldn't I take it; and how can I blame them? No; the bit of

luck I hope for is to get a good place some day on the walls; and that is no easy, if you think of all the people who want to be hung. They did hang one o' mine last year, but it was away at the roof; so you see my line of luck is no clear before me yet, and yours is."

"But I have only the chance," said Fitzgerald. "Since I have come to London I haven't earned a penny, as far as I know."

"Hear till him! Man, ye've everything before ye. Ye've all the train nicely laid; ye've only to light the match, and *whaff* goes the pouther!"

By this time they had both lit their pipes, and John Ross went on to talk about his own art in a way that very soon astonished his companion. Whether he could paint or not was still, so far as his companion was concerned, an open question, but at least he could talk, and that in a manner that was quite surprising. His vague, rambling discourse, warming up now and again into enthusiasm, was really eloquent, in a curious, bizarre, happy-go-lucky kind of fashion; full of figures, of quick, happy illustrations; scorn-

ful at times, as he hit out right and left; and occasionally describing an object as if he had flashed a ray of sunshine on it. Fitzgerald was intensely interested, and could have gone on for ever listening; but at the same time he could not help wondering what the actual work was like of a man who was at one moment denouncing the Pre-Raphaelites for their worship of sadness, their archaic mannerisms, and their cast-iron hardness of form, and at the next denouncing the French landscape-artists for their fuzziness of detail, their trickiness, their evasion of daylight.

"It is not what I can do myself," he said at last, observing that Fitzgerald's eyes had strayed once or twice to the canvases; "it is what I know I should try to do. Suppose you want to paint a field of ripe corn: will ye get at it, do ye think, by sitting down and pentin' the stalks and the heads—ay, if ye were to spend a lifetime at it, and paint fifty thousand of them? Not one bit; if ye painted a hundred thousand of them as like as like could be, ye'd be no nearer getting at your cornfield. For what ye have to paint

is what ye see; and when ye look at a cornfield ye see nae single stalks at all, but a great mass of gold, as it were, with a touch of orange here, or paler yellow there, and a wash of green where the land is wet, and sometimes of warm red, even, where the stalks are mixed with weeds. And ye are no going to get that colour either by chasing the daylight out of the sky, and taking the thing into a room, and making a clever bit of a fuzzy French sketch in gray and green and black. That's easy—but it's no the cornfield. Ay, and there's more. Ye've got to paint more than ye see. Ye've got to put just that something into the cornfield that will make people's hearts warm to it when they see it on your canvas. Suppose that ye've been ill for a month or two; laid on your back, maybe, and sick tired of the pattern on the walls o' your room; and at last the day comes when the doctor thinks you might be lifted into a carriage and taken oot for a drive. And we'll say it's a fine warm afternoon, and your heart is just full of wonder and gladness, like, at the trees and the sunlight and the soft

air; and we'll say that all of a sudden, at the turning o' the road, ye come in sicht of this field of ripe corn, just as yellow as yellow can be under the glow of the sky. Ay, and what is it when ye see such a wonderful and beautiful thing—what is it that brings the tears to your e'en? I say, what is it? For it's *that* ye've got to catch and put in your picture; or ye'll be a d—d mistake as a painter!"

Fitzgerald did not stay to ask him whether this was not demanding that the landscape-painter should possess the nervous system of an invalid (though, perhaps, something might be said even for that theory, as applied to all forms of art); he was much too interested to interrupt. But, by a singular chance, Ross drifted away from painting altogether. He was talking of the instinct for good colour that many people had, who had no artistic training whatsoever, and by accident he referred to fish and artificial flies, and so forth. Fitzgerald looked up suddenly.

"Are you a fisherman, too?" he said quickly.

"A wee bit. Are you?"

"I have thrown a fly," said Fitzgerald, modestly, and feeling in his pocket for a certain envelope.

"As I was saying, that's why I hold the salmon to be the king o' fish. He knows good colour. It's no use trying him with your aniline dyes; yellow and scarlet and gold—that's what he watches for; whereas trout—ay, and even sea-trout, are a mean, depraved, magenta-minded race o' creatures. Man, I filled my basket last year in Perthshire wi' the most miserable puce things."

"But what was the colour?"

"Puce. A dirty, drab-lilac kind of thing it was. But that was naething to the fly that was recommended me for sea-trout in Argyleshire—ay, and it took too. Just think of this—the body arsenic green worsted, with a bit of white tinsel; the hackle a purple blue; and the wings—heaven knows where they came from, except it might have been from a hoodie crow—a heedjous gray, like the colour of a decayed corpse. Do ye think a salmon would have looked at such a thing?"

"Perhaps," said Master Willie, as he slowly drew out an envelope from his pocket and put it on the table, "this would be more to his liking?"

"Eh, man!" said Ross, drawing out the great flies in all their royal splendour of crimson silk, and yellow tinsel, and golden pheasant feathers. "Where got ye them?"

"I have been amusing myself making them for a friend—the man I told you about; I could not think of any other way of showing him I was sensible of his kindness."

"Ay, did ye make these yoursel'? Now that I think of it, ye dinna look as if ye had spent a' your life in a newspaper office."

"I have spent most of it tramping over wild bogs and on hillsides," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh. "A good deal more than I should have done."

"Shooting?"

"Yes."

"What sort?"

"Oh, mostly wild-fowl; teal, snipe, woodcock, and so on; chiefly in the winter."

"Hard work, then?"

But here the conversation went far afield; for there were descriptions of winter nights on the bog-land, and winter mornings on the hill, and wild adventures along the shore in snow time or in the hard black frost. Even to Fitzgerald himself—who was pleased to see how interested his companion was in these reminiscences—it seemed that they were more picturesque now and here in London than when he had to get up shivering in the dark morning, and dress by candle-light, and sally forth through the silent street of Inisheen. He forgot the wet clothes in describing the view from the mountain-side outlooking to the sea. He forgot the mortification of misses in the glory of lucky finds. These days of sport that are lived over again in memory generally end with a heavy bag; and however tired and cold and wet and hungry the sportsman may have been in reality, he forgets all that, and remembers only the delight with which that heavy bag is thrown down in the hall, and the warm, snug evening afterwards, when the dinner-things are removed, and chairs drawn to the

fire, and the friendly tobacco begins to throw a charm over the soul.

Only once did Fitzgerald, who, it must be confessed, had enjoyed talking over these things, try to start his companion off again about painting. "Are you a sea painter?" he said. "Do you paint sea-pieces as well?" —and then he glanced again at the dusty gray canvases.

"I?" said Ross. "No, I should think not! Why, it would break my heart. Other things are difficult enough; but that! Man, I see pictures of the sea at the Academy that just make one laugh. Every wave as accurately shaped and modelled as if it was cast out of melted cannon; every little turn of foam, as clean cut as a meerschaum pipe. God, the fellows must be cleverer than Joshua the son of Nun, for they must have got the sea as well as the sun and clouds to stand still. Did ever man's eyes see moving water like that? Moving water that is a constant distraction of lights and shifting shadows and forms—lightning touches you might say, so swift are they—all bewildering

and glancing round ye; and *that* is what ye begin to cut and carve and stick on canvas as if it were slices of cream-cheese on the top o' green sealing-wax. No, no; it's bad enough inland. Even when ye get perfectly still shadows on a perfectly still loch, there's an oily kind of glisten that no pent-box is likely to get for ye. Eh, and such chances as we had sometimes at the wild-fowl when we were camping out—that would have made your mouth water; ay, and at black game too. Nearly every morning when we went out to wash in the burn—that was when we had the caravan in Perthshire—I've seen them walking about without the least fear o' us. Maybe the old black cock would give a cluck-cluck of warning, but the hen and her brood scarcely heeded. Deed I once hit an old gray hen with a pent brush, as sure as death. And when, at last, the keeper lent me a gun and said I might shoot a bird once in a while—for our own cooking, ye ken, out I went as early as six o'clock——" So again they were back on the various adventures and experiences of shooting;

recalling vivid rambles in other years, now in Inverness-shire, now on the desolate bog-lands near to Inisheen. And so interesting was this talk, that when Fitzgerald definitely rose to depart, at the hour of half-past four in the morning, he had almost forgotten that he had not seen his host's pictures.

"Pictures," said John Ross, with a laugh, "toots no, man, ye can see pictures any day, and better than mine. But I would like ye to come in whenever ye have half an hour, and smoke a pipe and let us know how ye are getting on,"

"All right, I shall be delighted," said Fitzgerald, most heartily. "And I may learn something to-morrow—that is to say, if my nose has not become twice its natural size, in which case I shall keep indoors."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF A CAREER.

However, there was no trace of the blow discoverable next day, and so on this fine May morning Fitzgerald set about the accomplishment of his various tasks. First of all he had to accompany his artist friend to the police station; though indeed he harboured no sentiment of revenge against the luckless Cobbler who had once more fallen into the clutches of the law. Then he proceeded to get the thirty pounds made transferable to Ireland. This, nevertheless, he did with some compunction. For, if he was to fight his way in London, was it fair to Kitty, who had entrusted her future to him, that he should thus throw away the sinews of war? Was it not running a tremendous risk to leave himself with only seven pounds before securing some definite work? But then on

the other hand he had fair prospects before him; and he had the courage of two or three and twenty; besides, he was not going to allow that blackguard Maloney to triumph over his father, Coursing Club or no Coursing Club. And so he went and sent off the money, and then made his way to the Albany, where he had an appointment with Mr. Hilton Clarke. When Fiammetta showed him into the richly coloured room, he found that gentleman reclining in a low easy-chair, in a voluminous dressing gown, a cigarette in one hand, a paper-covered novel in the other, while before him on the little table were the remains of a French breakfast.

"How are you, Fitzgerald?" he said, throwing aside the book. "Sit down and have some coffee and a cigarette. No? You'll find that Chartreuse worth trying. Well, and what did you think of the great Gifford? Was the godlike man up to your expectations?"

"I was very much interested," said Fitzgerald, rather timidly, for indeed he did not like the way in which Mr. Hilton Clarke

spoke of the literary calling and of its professors, whilst he did not wish to show the presumption of putting himself into antagonism with one who was so much his superior. "I have always had a great regard for the *Liberal Review*, and—of course, I never thought I should ever meet the Editor. I haven't seen you to thank you for giving me such a chance—perhaps you don't quite understand what it is to a young fellow who has only heard of well-known men. I—I thought it was a great honour."

"Oh, you will soon get rid of all that modesty," said the other. "It is a useless article in London."

"We walked home together," continued Fitzgerald, "as far as Sloane Street, and Mr. Gifford was good enough to say I might try my hand at a notice of that new novel 'Daphne's Shadow' for the *Liberal Review*."

"The devil he did! What can have made him so good-natured?"

"I think I know," put in Fitzgerald, dexterously. "His good nature was caused by your good nature in recommending me."

"Oh that was nothing," said the other, carelessly. "Well, you must be cautious how you set about it. Bring the book to me."

"But I have already sent in the review."

"Already? You haven't been wasting time, then."

"And I have been doing more than that," said Fitzgerald, pulling out a certain envelope. "I have been putting together a few salmon flies for you, if you care to have them. I found I could get the materials better in London."

"Ah, thanks, much obliged," said Hilton Clarke, taking out one or two of the flies with his beautiful white fingers. "But about this review. I am afraid the gray-eyed Athene wasn't looking after you when you sent it in in such a hurry. I wish you had come to me first. Young reviewers don't seem to understand that they ought to consider for whom they are writing when they write. It isn't the public; the public judge for themselves nowadays; dinner-tables and clubs do all that. Nor the author; the author is pig-

headed; besides if you don't tell him he is better than Byron or Shakespere he will think you are devoured with jealousy and spite. No," continued Hilton Clarke, as he carefully rolled up another cigarette. "You are writing for your editor. He is the audience you ought to consider. He is the person you must impress with a conviction of your sagacity. Now, to do that, you see, you want experience, you want to know your man. I wish you had come to me. I suppose it never occurred to you to put John Brown into the review you wrote for Gifford?"

"John Brown?" said Fitzgerald, looking bewildered. "What John Brown?"

"John Brown of Harper's Ferry. No, you never thought of that. But if you had only come to me, I could have told you that you had only to put John Brown into the review, anywhere, anyhow, and you'd have fetched old Gifford to a dead certainty. He can't withstand John Brown. All you've got to do," he continued, contemplating one of the salmon flies and stroking out the soft feathers, "is to take John Brown's body,

without any wings, or hackle, or tinsel, as one might say, and you drop that fly quietly over Gifford's nose, and he'll rise to it like a grilse just fresh run from the sea."

Fitzgerald could not understand why this friend of his lost no opportunity of throwing taunts—however they might be veiled in a sort of scornful fastidiousness—at Mr. Gifford; but for the constraint with which he listened to such speeches there were also other reasons. Among the various articles of young Fitzgerald's creed (he was barely three and twenty) there were none he clung to more implicitly than these two. First, that the great majority of womankind were honest and honourable, self-denying, believable, and worthy of all the beautiful things that had been said about them by the poets; and, secondly, that literature was one of the noblest callings on the face of the earth, and that he who did good work therein, whether it was in definitely adding to the world's possessions in that way, or whether it was merely in teaching men, from week to week, or from day to day, what they ought to value,

was a public benefactor who ought to be regarded with respect and affection and gratitude. Now on both these points Mr. Hilton Clarke discoursed with a complacently open scepticism; and at such times Fitzgerald wished he could close his ears against this talk; not that it in the slightest degree affected his beliefs, but that it affected what he wished to regard as the character of his friend. Fitzgerald was naturally a hero-worshipper, and he was capable of a warm gratitude. He wished to think the best of his friend. And when Hilton Clarke talked in this fashion, which he seemed to enjoy in proportion as Fitzgerald's face fell, the latter would try to close his ears as much as he could. Then again when he left he would endeavour to forget all that he had heard. He would remember only Hilton Clarke's best points—the charm of his conversation when he happened to light on some literary point that interested him; his great kindness shown to a mere stranger met by chance in the south of Ireland; and his personal courtesy (the way in which he had come to the

relief of his incorrectly attired guest, was still fresh in Fitzgerald's mind). Besides, perhaps his experience of women had been unfortunate; and perhaps his disparagement of contemporary literature, especially of critical literature, was due to a sort of modesty, seeing that he himself held an enviable position in it.

"Well, now, Fitzgerald, let's get on to this magazine business. Won't you smoke?"

"No, thank you, I never smoke till night; it takes up too much time."

"Ah, the eager impetuosity of youth. When you get a dozen years older, you'll be glad of something to help you to pass the hours. Well, my friend the capitalist has got some impetuosity too. In one day he has managed to secure a business manager for us, and also a publishing-office in the Strand. No doubt we should start as soon as possible; for in a short time every one will be in London for the season, and then it is that people begin to talk about their plans for the autumn. Scobell suggests the week after next; but

that is clearly impossible. We must have material to begin with; people won't pay a shilling for a mere programme of our intentions. My private impression is that the capitalist imagines he will find himself a person of importance in society through his connection with this magazine; but it will be part of your business, Mr. Sub-Editor, to remember that it is I who am editor of the magazine, and not Dick Scobell."

"Oh, of course. I know what rows with proprietors are," said Fitzgerald.

"Proprietors are the most unreasonable of mortals. They don't understand their proper sphere of duty,—which is to pay and look pleasant. If the venture succeeds, they get good interest for their money. If it doesn't, they don't mend matters by coming in at intervals, like a Greek chorus: 'Oh! oh! oh! Woe! woe! woe!' Now, as regards your own position, Fitzgerald," he said, as he poured out a small glass of Chartreuse —showing as he did so a singular-looking ring on his finger, consisting of a little Indian god, in gold, fastened on a broad silver hoop.

"Have you considered the question of remuneration?"

"As regards myself?"

"Yes."

"Not in the least," said Fitzgerald, with something of a blush. "I don't expect very much at the outset. I think I am very lucky to get a start so early after coming to London. There is an artist neighbour of mine who thinks I have been very lucky indeed, and he considers everything a matter of luck, even getting elected a member of the Academy."

"He must have been looking at this year's exhibition," said Hilton Clarke, drily. "Well, now, this capitalist friend gives me a lump sum, I may explain to you, and he holds me responsible for all the literary matter, and for having the thing properly put together. What you will have to do won't interfere, I hope and think, with any more serious literary work. Very well, what do you think of four pounds a week? Speak frankly, you know, for I may squeeze the good Scobell a little further yet."

"Four pounds a week?" said Fitzgerald,

with his face brightening up with surprise. "Then my artist friend was right. I had five-and-twenty shillings a week from the *Cork Chronicle*."

"It is enough, then?"

"Yes, indeed. It is far more than I expected."

"You should never say that. It is not wise. However, as I am dealing with another man's money, I am not going to reduce the offer; and I think myself it is a fair one. And so you had five-and-twenty shillings a week on the *Cork Chronicle?*" said Hilton Clarke, regarding the younger man. "Twenty-five shillings a week; youth, and health, and high ambition; and somebody to write love verses about: I suppose you were not unhappy? Oh yes, I could detect that subtle inspiration here and there, in whatever guise the young lady turned up. But I have always had a suspicion that when youthful poets gave their sweethearts long and sounding names, the ladies themselves were rather short of stature. Is not that so? It is like calling a musical little verse in

Horace a choriambic dimeter acatalectic. The Lady Irmingarde, for example. That is a fine name; but I would wager now that the Lady Irmingarde is not over five feet two."

"I don't see what that has to do with this new magazine," said Master Willie, striving to be very calm, but with all the quick blood of the Fitzgeralds blazing in his face.

"Don't be angry, man," said the other good-naturedly. "I hope it will have a great deal to do with the new magazine. You see, in every well-conducted household you will find two or three people either in love with somebody or other, or else willing to think of the days when they were; and you can't appeal to that sentiment unless you, the writer, have yourself a fresh fount of inspiration to draw from. You don't suppose that the old writers, when they were describing Helen, formed her out of their own head? Of course not. Of course they turned to the pretty Chloe or the laughing Lalage of their acquaintance, to see what soft cheeks and pretty eyes could be likened to. Do you remember

Symmons's translation of that passage in the *Agamemnon*—well, it is rather a paraphrase than a translation; but listen to this as a piece of English :—

> 'When first she came to Ilion's towers
> Oh, what a glorious sight, I ween, was there!
> The tranquil beauty of the gorgeous queen
> Hung soft as breathless summer on her cheeks,
> Where, on the damask sweet, the glowing zephyr slept;
> And like an idol beaming from its shrine,
> So o'er the floating gold around her thrown
> Her peerless face did shine;
> And though sweet softness hung upon their lids,
> Yet her young eyes still wounded where they looked.'

Is not that fine?

> 'Yet her young eyes still wounded where they looked.' "

And indeed Fitzgerald considered it was so fine—and so nearly suggestive of a pair of soft black innocent young eyes that he knew of far away, that he straightway forgot all his wrath, and proposed to his companion that, if he had time, they should walk down to the Strand, and have a look at the offices.

"I can't very well," said Hilton Clarke, yawning and stretching out his long legs, and

stroking his yellow beard. "I have got to dress first. Then I am going on to Jermyn Street to the Turkish Baths. Then I've got one or two calls to make in the afternoon. But you might go down if you like, and introduce yourself to the manager. His name is Silas Earp. And don't forget we must have a touch of sentiment in the magazine; it is wonderful the interest that grown people take in young people's love affairs. Look at the eagerness with which they read Breach of Promise cases—the more absurd the better, don't you see; for they are delighted to find other people making just such fools of themselves as they did at the same age."

Well, Fitzgerald got away; and was rather glad; for somehow he liked Hilton Clarke better, and was more grateful to him, when he was not listening to him. And now indeed the day was joyful to him—a fresh, clear, May day, with the pavements of Piccadilly looking quite white; and all he could think of was that Kitty would not know soon enough of the good fortune that had befallen him. After all, why should he have been

angry about the mention of the Lady Irmingarde?—it was only good-humoured banter. For indeed as Andy the Hopper had remarked, "'twas Masther Willie had the duck's back;" and annoyances ran clean off his shoulders, so long as you gave him plenty of fresh air and sunlight, and a moderate share of pavement for his eager and rapid walking.

He went down to the Strand and saw the offices, which were in a sad state of confusion and dust. Likewise he had a long conversation with Mr. Earp, and a briefer one with the great capitalist himself, who seemed surprised that Hilton Clarke had not shown up, though Fitzgerald ventured to point out that an editor could not be of much use about the place until they had provided him with at least a desk and a penny bottle of ink. Then with one hurried and passing glance at the office of the *Liberal Review*—where, perhaps, that first contribution of his was at this very moment under consideration—he set off home as fast as his legs could carry him, anxious to fill up the rest of the day with some work,

and also in the secret hope of finding a letter from Kitty, missed by his early outgoing of that morning, awaiting him. Moreover, he was very hungry, after these many hours; and so, on reaching his spacious if somewhat bare and low-roofed study, he besought his landlady to cook him a chop with all convenient speed. And indeed that was a right royal banquet that he enjoyed there, all by himself, in the silent, big room, made cheerful by the sunlight streaming in at the open window; for if it consisted only of a chop, some bread, and a glass of ale, was there not a letter of Kitty's, over a dozen pages long, to serve as a musical and laughing accompaniment? The sun shone warm on the faded rugs on the floor; there was the faintest stirring of the wind among the young plane-trees in the courtyard outside; in the silence it almost seemed as if he could hear Kitty talking to him. And then again he had to imagine another picture—that lofty little terrace that looked down on Cork and over to Shandon steeple; and a small room there; and Kitty bending over these precious

leaves, and sometimes raising her head, to look at the rain or to think of him far away.

"Audley Place, Tuesday.

"My Beloved and Bonny Coulin[1]—

"What I have done to deserve it I don't know, but since ever I came back to this blessed town there has been nothing but rain, rain, and rain, and the Beautiful City, that you tried to make me believe was like Venice, is nothing but a mass of smoke away down in a hole, and St. Mary's steeple over there seems to shiver with cold when it strikes the half-hours, and the only human beings within sight are a lot of rooks in the meadows across the road, and you can tell by the noise they make they are in a frightful temper because of the wet. I do wonder now more than ever where, in such a climate, a certain person got all the sunniness that's in his face, and in his eyes, and more particularly his hair. Did he take all there was to get and leave none? At all events, Master

[1] *Coulin* in Irish means "The youth with the flowing hair." Miss Romayne was doubtless familiar with Moore's songs.

Coulin, it's a very good thing for you, and it's a very bad thing for me, that you and I did not live in the time when the cold-hearted Saxon made the young Irishmen crop their locks, for then I wouldn't have looked at you, and I'd have minded my own proper business. Dear me, the audacity of some people and the folly of others! Just when a good contralto is worth a mint of money in Italian opera, jealousy steps in and says, No, you sha'n't; you sha'n't even be allowed to sing in England; no more Crystal Palace for you; nothing but concerts in such centres of civilisation as Cork and Limerick and Belfast; and just to make sure of hiding away such a diamond—no, I suppose it should be an emerald in Ireland—I'll set Don Fierna and his wicked elves to bind you in invisible chains, and something awful will happen to you if you even whisper La Scala in your dreams. Well, whether it was her tremendous good-nature, or whether it was the sunlight that had got into the brown of Mr. Jealousy's hair, or whether she got such a fright with the ghosts that she pro-

mised anything without the slightest notion of keeping her word, I don't know, but the thing was done; and then all of a sudden—in return for her extraordinary good-nature and self-sacrifice, she finds herself a forlorn and forsaken damsel; left to pace up and down the sand of Inisheen, which, as Andy the Hopper remarks, is so firm and clean that, 'sure, Miss, ye might walk on it wid a satin shoe.'

"Oh, Willie, I'm sick tired of the rain, and I don't know what I'm writing to you. I was wet through last night coming home. What induced me to take these rooms I don't know. I shall never again take lodgings where one cannot drive home on a wet night. But Miss Patience says she likes large views; I suppose they conform with her great mind. I have been so good, Willie. I have been really so very good that I don't know what to do with myself; and I expect to find wings sprouting some morning when I get up. I haven't gone round by the barracks once; and the two or three times I have gone round I have kept my eyes fixed

on the gravel *the whole way*, just in case a young ossifer might come riding out (I can see the frown on your face quite clearly, and perhaps it isn't safe to put jokes in a letter, when one isn't by to be scolded for impertinence, flippancy, unlady-like manners, and all the pleasant rest of it). So we'll get back to business, please, and the truth is, you know, Master Willie, although it has been reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon,' all the same the English singer can't earn a living by singing that one song,—unless indeed she were to sing it through the streets, like Nellie in the *Green Bushes*. No, nor even when she makes a skilful selection illustrating the wonderful virtues of the Irish people, and when she shifts her engagements as much as possible from north to south, and east to west; yes, and even when she makes excuses for pretty long holidays—at Inisheen or elsewhere; even the Irish people, though liking to be told of their virtues, may get a little tired of her, and wish to see a little less of her. In that case managers might begin

to hint about reduction of terms; whereas, even at present, it's just about all she can do to keep things straight—waiting for the glorious time when Prince Golden-hair is coming to claim her and carry her off. Very well, now, this is the point; at the —— Theatre in Dublin they're going to put in a panorama between the pieces, and they've made me an offer; (now you needn't jump out of your chair like that; it isn't to go on the stage) I say they have made me a very fair and liberal offer if I will go and sing for them—only one song each evening, which is light work, and I shall have no expense of dresses or gloves, for I sing in the 'wings' unseen. Don't you see the panorama is really a series of pictures of Irish scenery, and when they come to the finest of them—of course it's Killarney in moonlight, that's because they don't know the glen near the Blackwater where Don Fierna lives and where mischief is done to the hearts of poor distressed damsels,—then the orchestra begins to play very softly and sweetly, and then you hear the voice of an angel (that's me) singing

away somewhere—at Innisfallen or Killeenalougha. I don't think much of the song they have sent me; but I daresay it will sound very nice in that mysterious way, and the moonlight and the view of the lake will put a charm into my poor singing. Now Willie, I know you don't want me to go to Dublin; but this isn't like going to Dublin in an ordinary kind of way, for my name won't appear in the bills at all, and nobody will know who is singing. It will really be a long holiday for me, and I shall come back to my concert series after a sufficiently long absence, and I promise you that as I shall have no audience visible, I will sing every evening just as if I were singing to you; and think of you all the time, and the management will not have reason to be sorry for *that*. Now what do you say? My father's half-pay just about keeps him, you know; but I have always tried to send him some little present about mid-summer to induce him to go down to Ramsgate or Margate for a week. Then these long holidays, even with all the good old Patience's economy,

have very nearly emptied my purse, and supposing that Prince Golden-hair were suddenly to appear and say, 'Look sharp, Miss Kitty, I've found the bag of diamonds I went for. Come along!' wouldn't it be very awkward if I had to say, 'Oh, but, dear sir, I haven't got a farthing to buy my white satin dress with.' So be a good boy and don't make any objections, and every night I'll think of you as I'm singing the song—oh dear me, as if I had anything else to do now but think of you; with a bit of a cry now and again.

"What *is* the use of my writing to you? I know what you are doing at this moment. You are not working at all; you are not thinking of me at all; you are walking in Hyde Park with Mr. Supercilious and admiring the fine ladies, and I shouldn't wonder if he had got you to convict-crop your hair, like his own, and wear gloves to get your hands white. Why should I waste my time on you when you're not thinking about me? Perhaps you won't open this letter at all; perhaps you will leave it lying unopened on the table, I shouldn't wonder a bit.

"I got Miss Patience to drive out on a car to *the glen*. But it was common daylight, and Don Fierna and his elves had gone away indoors; and there was nothing but grumbling from the dear old Patience at her having to scramble down the bank and scratch her hand with briers. She couldn't imagine why I wanted to pull her to pieces like that, nor could I get Andy the Hopper that same afternoon to say a word about fairies or Don Fierna. Indeed all the neighbourhood became quite commonplace. Inisheen is a mean-looking miserable hole; I never saw such dirty streets; and the wretched tubs of vessels are lying not on sand at all, but on mud. I hated it—except one or two nights when the moon was up, and I looked out on the cliffs beyond the bar, and I said to myself, 'Well now, if my bonny boy were coming home from these cliffs carrying with him the wild pigeons he had been after all the day, perhaps I'd like the place a little better,' and then, you know, how could I help thinking of the night you rowed me home in the boat, and all Inisheen asleep, and you

had wrapped me up so tight in the shawl. I waved my handkerchief to you from the window, but I daren't lift the window, so you couldn't see. I watched you go away back to the town—the boat the wee-est black speck on the silver of the water. Dear me! that I should say anything against Inisheen, that is the dearest spot in the world to me, and hallowed by associations that memory will never give up. My dear, dear Inisheen! My beautiful Inisheen! And will it be moonlight on that same night seven years hence? Perhaps I shall not be so frightened then.

"But what I dread most of all, Willie, is next Sunday morning. I know it will be a beautiful morning just to spite me. And I know how I shall wait about the window with all my things on long before the time, and looking over to the clock of St. Anne's and wishing it would push ahead and make the single Shandon bell strike the half hour. (Why did you quarrel with Miss Patience, Willie? it was so nice to listen for your ring at the door.) And then half-past ten strikes

and out I go; and I am certain it will be the loveliest morning, and the hawthorn just coming out, and all the fresh air sweet-scented. And no one at the corner—the place quite empty—no trace of the game-keeperish young Apollo, with the shy eyes and the sun-brown locks, who used to say 'The top of the morning to ye, Miss Kitty!' and be so modest and grateful for her condescension. Then away she goes *all alone* past the barracks—but really, really and truly, honour bright, keeping her eyes on the ground *the whole way* until she has passed the walls—and then do you know of a lane about there, Master Willie? Do you know of a lane about there that you can go along and twist and turn about, until you get out among hedgerows, where grown-up children can pull wild flowers and say pretty things to each other? Did you ever go along such a lane?

"But you are not listening. You are out walking with Mr. Superciliousness, and if there's anybody in the wide world who hates you *with her whole heart*, it's your despised but forgiving, KITTY."

He looked at the beginning of the letter again.

"I'm glad it rained on Tuesday," he said to himself; and he thought that his conscience would perhaps absolve him if he put off his work for a little while, to send Kitty just as long a letter as she had sent him—cheating the great distance between them as it were, and imagining himself talking to her in the little room looking over the valley to Shandon tower.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST CHECK.

Time passed and Fitzgerald grew very anxious about not hearing anything, good, bad, or indifferent, concerning the review he had sent to Mr. Gifford. He ventured to mention the matter to Hilton Clarke.

"Get it back," he said laughing, "and put John Brown into it."

However, if each morning brought its little pang of disappointment, there was no time for balancing hope and fear during the rest of the day; for now the new magazine was being pushed forward, and everybody had his hands full. Everybody, that is to say, except the editor-in-chief, who, when Fitzgerald called on him and urged him to come down to the Strand to decide some matter or other, seemed much more inclined for a lounge along Piccadilly, if the morning

was fine, accompanied by this attentive Telemachus, who willingly listened to his discursive monologue. By this time Fitzgerald had got to know something more about Hilton Clarke, and had observed among other things that he seemed quite incapable of denying himself any gratification that lay within his reach. No matter what it was—having his initials in silver on his ivory-backed hair-brushes, or the purchase of an illuminated missal displayed in a shop window; the whim of the moment had to be gratified, and he was careful to point out to Fitzgerald that he, Hilton Clarke, had already done a good deal for Mr. Scobell in presenting him with the idea of this new magazine, and also to assign as a reason for his carelessness or his idleness the necessity of the business people having all their arrangements completed first.

One morning Fitzgerald went up to the Albany and found his chief with the accustomed cigarette in his hand reading the *Contes Rémois*—or, more probably, and profitably, looking over the delightful little wood-cuts. He put the book aside as Fitzgerald entered.

"Mr. Scobell has made a suggestion that I think very good," said the latter, after the usual greetings. "He thinks you should have for your opening article a paper written by a lawyer, some well-known Q.C., for example, on the terms of leases and agreements, and the points that should be carefully looked after. '*Points on which a solicitor should be consulted*,' he suggests. You know, lots of people enter into agreements about a shooting or a house, that look all right and safe, but that may land them anywhere. Now just at the outset wouldn't that be rather appropriate?"

Hilton Clarke looked at him.

"The suggestion is Scobell's?"

"Yes."

"Well, you see, I don't think it is a bad one; but at the outset it is most important for me, and for you, and for Dick Scobell to know precisely where we are. Now I am the editor of this new magazine, and Mr. Scobell is not."

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, wondering; "but surely you may take suggestions from any-

body if they happen to be worth anything?"

"From anybody—except my proprietor, you understand. No, we will get our own idea for an opening article, Fitzgerald. Let's talk about something you are more familiar with. And I have some news for you. One of the most charming women in London, one of the wittiest and one of the best looking, too, has expressed an interest in you."

"Oh, indeed," said Fitzgerald, professing to be very grateful, as in duty bound.

"I showed her your 'Woodland Walk,' and she commissioned me to ask you whether the verses were your own——"

"Which verses?" said Fitzgerald, for indeed there were several little bits of rhyme cunningly interwoven with that gossip about birds and waterfalls.

"Why, those with the refrain, 'The little ringlets round her ears.' Ah, I can see they were your own. I thought so myself. And I was to ask whether the little ringlets were dark or golden—golden, she guessed."

Fitzgerald flushed and said with an indifferent air,

"I suppose the lines can apply to any colour—pink as well as another."

"You won't tell us, then? Well, it was a pretty notion to bring the refrain in at the end of each verse. The music of it catches you. If I were writing an opera I should have one particular air running all through it; cropping up here and there, you know, so that people should get quite familiar with it, and be able to whistle it as they go home. You have no idea how consoling it is to some people to whistle an air from a new opera as they are coming out. That is a pretty refrain you have in your verses.

> 'You hear the secret words she hears,
> You little ringlets round her ears!'

Yes, I like it. The repetition is effective."

"I have been to the lithographer's," said Fitzgerald, shortly. "The cover looks very well; but I have told him to try red on a white ground. That would be clearly seen on the bookstalls."

"Ah, yes, no doubt. Earp will see to that, I suppose. Now, Fitzgerald, I suppose you know very little about women as yet?"

"I suppose not," said the other.

"I know one thing that will surprise you when you find it out, as I daresay you will." He stretched out his legs, and regarded the tips of his fingers—a favourite attitude of his when he had got something he liked to talk about. But sometimes he regarded his companion. "I am quite convinced myself that there are a large number of women who know nothing about, who are incapable of knowing anything about, the romantic sentiment of love. They have never experienced it; they will never experience it; and when they read about it in books they don't believe in it; they think it is only the ridiculous exaggerations of a poet or a playwright. They no more believe what they read about the passion of love than a man with an unmusical ear believes what people say about Mozart, or than a man whose eye is uneducated believes what is written about Titian. But, mind you, these are the women it is safest to make

a marriage contract with. They will honourably fulfil their part of it; make good wives and mothers; and be affectionate enough in a trustworthy, patient, unimaginative sort of way, without causing any anxiety or bother. Well, now, I believe there are other women who are just as much the other way—who have an absolute hunger and thirst for the sentiment of love, for its dram-drinking as you might say—women of an unappeasable heart. If it is your bad luck to come across one of these at the moment when her affections are by some extraordinary chance disengaged—she will almost certainly make you fall in love with her; and then, mind you, so long as you are near her, and keep her amused and occupied with fallings out and reconciliations and so forth, I daresay she will remain quite faithful to you. Oh yes, I have no doubt of that. But if you go away, that is dangerous. Her eyes will begin to roam about, and her heart to put out trembling little feelers. Of course if you were to marry her off hand that might settle it; and certainly if she had children she would prob-

ably keep all right, for she would transfer her excess of affection to them. But to be left alone—to have this warm generous little heart of hers wanting to be kind to somebody—and her young eyes still wounding where they look—poor thing, how can she help going and playing the mischief?"

"Perhaps your experience of women has been unfortunate," said Fitzgerald, as respectfully as possible. It was quite clear to him that Hilton Clarke had, perhaps in conjunction with the clever lady he had referred to, been speculating about the person who had inspired the verses in the "Woodland Walk"—that is to say, Kitty; and Fitzgerald resented this harmless curiosity as a piece of intolerable impertinence. They wanted to know whether her hair was dark or golden; they had been wondering whether she was a placid, faithful, unsentimental good sort of stupid creature, or a dangerous flirt—either suggestion seeming to him monstrous; and generally, as it appeared to him, they had been betraying a quite gratuitous interest in his private affairs. But Hilton Clarke con-

tinued as if he were quite unaware of the resentment that these generalisations of his had provoked.

"No," he said, quietly, "I think not. And I would call it observation rather than experience. I suppose now you have never noticed that a woman's eyes are always wandering? You have never sate at a *table-d'hôte*, and watched, for the fun of the thing, have you?"

"No, I should probably be attending to my dinner."

"Ah, that is it. That is just it. If you look at the married couples, the husbands are attending to their dinners. It is the women whose eyes are constantly on the alert. You may look at the man as long as you like and he won't know anything about it; but look at the woman only for a second, and her eyes will meet yours—of course instantly to turn away again. Indeed, I believe that women can tell when they are being regarded, even when their own eyes are bent upon the table. It is a kind of instinct."

"You seem to do a good deal of staring when you go abroad," remarked Fitzgerald.

"No; I think not. But I have tried the experiment a few times. Oh, by the way, my charming friend says I may take you to one of her smoking-parties."

"Smoking-parties? Are there ladies there?"

"Yes, of course."

"And they smoke?"

"If they are inclined to. Some do; some don't. It is Liberty Hall."

"And does the charming lady smoke?" said Fitzgerald, timidly. He wanted to know something about her, as she had wanted to know something about Kitty.

"Well, occasionally. But she is quite as willing to sit in a corner with you, and talk to you; and very soon you will imagine you are listening to one of the laughing ladies out of Boccaccio. But it is dangerous."

"What is?"

"Her trying to keep those parties away from Sir John's ears. She'd much better own up. Some time or other he'll come back from Ireland unexpectedly, and there will be a row."

"Sir John is her husband, I suppose?"

"Yes. I've asked her to write an article on grass-widows for our magazine, and I'll have to see it doesn't set Clapham in a blaze —Islington, rather. But we sha'n't have many subscribers in Islington."

"I think I must be off now," said Fitzgerald, rising. "You think, then, Mr. Scobell had better not speak about that article to a lawyer."

"I think, with Mr. Scobell's permission, I will edit the magazine myself. And so I am not to take any message about the little ringlets round her ears?"

"Oh, certainly. I told you," said Fitzgerald, "that pink was a good colour. Let them be pink, if you like."

"Wait a bit," said the other, laughing. "You won't be so uncommunicative when a certain bright-eyed lady gets you into a corner and talks to you; and asks to be allowed to light her cigarette at yours; that is coming very near, isn't it? Good-bye. Oh, about that review; if you are anxious, why don't you call and ask Gifford about it?"

"I would," said Fitzgerald, hesitatingly, "if I thought I shouldn't be driving him."

"Oh, bother him!" said Hilton Clarke, cheerfully. "If he does not want it, we can use it in the magazine."

That parting touch took away much of Fitzgerald's resentment. The man was evidently good-natured. And even supposing he had been pushing his questions or his surmises about Kitty a little too close, might it not have been through a really friendly interest? Then, again, it was something that so great and acknowledged an authority as Hilton Clarke had looked favourably on the little verses. Master Willie had placed no great store by them himself. He had, indeed, hidden them away in a rambling sort of gossip, imagining that no one but Kitty and himself would know that he himself had written them. And as they had pleased the great critic, he would write to Kitty and tell her. Had she not a sort of joint ownership in them?

Fitzgerald had now to return to the Strand; and as he was walking along that thorough-

fare it suddenly occurred to him that he would take Hilton Clarke's advice and call at the *Liberal Review* office, and so put an end to his anxiety. The advice was well meant; but it was injudicious; and still more injudicious was Fitzgerald's choice of an opportunity. To go and worry an editor about a neglected manuscript is a mistake at any time; but to do so before luncheon is pure madness. When the morning scramble of correspondence is well over; when the frugal chop and pint of claret have moderated the *sæva indignatio* produced by the contrariety of things; and when, perhaps, the mild Manilla and the evening papers may be still further inducing the editorial mind to repose, then indeed there may be hope for the anxious inquirer; but not before. Fitzgerald had to wait some twenty minutes in the office; during which time there was a constant passing up and down stairs on the part of strangers, whom he regarded with considerable awe. Then a boy brought him a message that Mr. Gifford could see him, and he followed the inky-fingered Mercury. In

a minute or two he was standing very much like a culprit in the front of a long writing-table; and Mr. Gifford, who was on the other side, and who looked impatient and troubled and hurried, was plunging to and fro in a sea of manuscripts.

"Ah, here it is," he said at last. "Sit down. Glad you have called. I meant to write. Well, you see——" He looked over a page or two, and an expression of dissatisfaction was very plainly visible on his face. "Why, you seem to have found nothing in the book, one way or the other!"

If Fitzgerald had had his wits about him, he would perhaps have remarked that that was precisely what he had found in the book; but he was far too disturbed and aghast at the querulous fashion in which the Editor spoke of the article upon which he had built so many hopes.

"No, I don't think this will do," continued Mr. Gifford, looking over the pages. "I am sorry to have given you the trouble; but really you have made nothing out of the book. Surely there must be something in it,

good or bad; you have found it nothing but what is lukewarm, like the church of the Lacedemonians. There is no flavour in what you have written. Look there!"

Fitzgerald was too agitated to think of putting the Laodiceans in their proper historical place; he mechanically took from Mr. Gifford a printed slip which the latter pulled off a file. It turned out to be a proof of a bookseller's advertisement; and at the head of the column appeared the contents of the forthcoming number of a great Quarterly.

"Do you see?" continued Mr. Gifford. "That article about 'A New Novelist' has been called forth by this very book that you see nothing in; and I am told they regard its publication as marking a new departure in modern English literature."

"Then I say that that is most shameful," said Fitzgerald, driven to desperation. "There must have been bribery or personal influence. The book is as weak and feeble as it can be; it is a scandal to English journalism that bribery of some kind or

another should have got such an article written."

"How can you tell?" said the other peevishly. "In your opinion the book is bad. Other people may not think so. And even you don't seem to think the book bad enough to call forth any definite disparagement."

"It is merely frivolous."

"And you are even complimentary here and there.—Well, then, perhaps you will excuse me if I point out some things that may be of service to you. You know you ought to be accurate in your quotations.

> '*De par le Roi, défense à Dieu,*
> *D'opérer miracle en ce lieu.*'

D'opérer instead of *de faire miracle*, and that in so familiar a quotation——"

"But *d'opérer* is right," said Fitzgerald, hastily interrupting.

Gifford stopped and regarded him.

"Oh, is it? What is your authority? I should have thought the old police distich was well enough known."

Fitzgerald was so anxious to justify him-

self, that his memory failed him altogether at this critical point. Nothing but confusion met him when he tried to recall where he had met with that luckless couplet. And so Mr. Gifford, turning from him to the manuscript, proceeded :

"Then you introduce extraneous matter for no sufficient reason. You say here, 'One might arrive at a sort of negative definition of poetry by saying that it was precisely that quality which is conspicuously absent from every page of Pope, and which is conspicuously present in almost every line of Coleridge.' Now what is the use of advancing an opinion like that?"

"One of the characters in the book——"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Gifford, with an impatience that was scarcely civil; though it was most likely he had been worried about something or other that morning, "but a reviewer cannot be expected to set all the opinions of all the characters in a book right. And when you proceed to remove Pope from the category of English poets, you want more than a single sentence if you would justify yourself.

It is not enough for you to say that such and such a thing is: you must prove it to be so. You can't go and settle half a hundred disputed literary points in the course of a single book notice——"

"I am sorry it won't do," said Fitzgerald, lifting his hat. "I may as well take the manuscript with me, if you don't mind."

"I am sorry you have had the trouble; but one must learn reviewing as other things; and perhaps I made a mistake in thinking you had had enough practice. There are one or two other points I might show you."

"Oh no, thank you; no, thank you," said Fitzgerald, with great courtesy, "I wouldn't trouble you. I must not take up so much of your time. Good morning. I am very much obliged to you."

And so he got himself out of the office with all his mind aflame. It was not so much disappointment as indignation that consumed him; indignation that such a book should be made so great a matter of, simply because it was written by a member of the government, by a man known in political life.

What was the objection, then, to this review but that he had not made it violent enough either with praise or blame? If he had made of it a balloon, now, and tied the worthless volumes to it and sent them up into the blue; or if he had made a nether mill-stone of it and hung it round Spencer Tollemache's neck, and plunged him in mid-ocean, no doubt the black-browed Editor would have been charmed. But because he had merely told the truth, the review was lukewarm like the Lacedemonians. The Lacedemonians! And *de faire miracle!*—he knew it was *d'opérer miracle!* As for Pope, he declared to himself that the whole "Essay on Man," boiled down and strained through a cotton rag, would not produce as much poetry as you could find in a single phrase of Herrick's or Suckling's. And then he devoted the whole art and function of criticism to the infernal gods; and then—in the middle of the Strand, among the hurrying strangers—he laughed lightly.

For it suddenly occurred to him that to betray such temper, or to feel so keenly his

disappointment, was not bearing out the character that Andy the Hopper had given of him to Kitty. Was he going to allow this first bit of misfortune to cast him down? He began to regard the matter from a common-sense point of view. After all, his being debarred from further hope of contributing to the *Liberal Review* (and he had to admit that Mr. Gifford's manner seemed conclusive on that point) did not necessarily doom him to starvation. And why should he be angry with the great Quarterly, even if it had been unduly influenced?—the public would speedily put the matter right by leaving the book, if it was worthless, unread. When he came to think of it, moreover, there might be some justification for Mr. Gifford's harsh censure, regarding the article from the editorial point of view. Doubtless he ought to have left Pope alone. He should not have altered a familiar quotation without being ready with his authority. In fact, by the time that he had reached Charing Cross, he had convinced himself that the world was not so much amiss; and this gradual revival from his fit of disap-

pointment did not at all stop there; but quite suddenly—and in a manner that seemed to fill all the dusky sunlight of the Strand with a sort of rose-colour—it sprang to a wild resolve. What if he were to go away back to Ireland, and spend a day among the hawthorn lanes with Kitty?

He could not resist. The rebound from that extreme depression carried him away with it; and only the necessity of having to buy a Bradshaw and get some information out of that distressing volume succeeded in calming down this bewildering delight and anticipation that had seized hold of him. Yes, by taking the mail train to Bristol that night, which was a Friday, he could reach Cork on the Saturday evening; and then the Sunday morning—and his meeting Kitty—and clasping her warm white little hand! The whole trip would cost little over two pounds: was it not his only chance before the long drudgery of the new magazine began? A hundred times over he pictured to himself Kitty's face when she should suddenly see him there waiting for her, and each time the

expression was different. And as for reviews, and quotations, and blacked-browed editors, and any fifteen dozen of Daphne's Shadows, he let all these things slip entirely away from him, to be lost in the jangle and roar of the mighty town he was leaving. He was not thinking of them at all. He was thinking of Sunday morning and of Kitty's tender look of wonder and welcome.

It was about a quarter past eight in the evening when he reached Cork; and they were just beginning to light the lamps. There was still a lurid sort of twilight in the stormy purple-blue sky, and the pavements were of a pale gray; but one after another the orange points of the lamps declared themselves, and here and there a yellow glow shone out from the shop windows. The omnibus rattled through the town; past the black groups of idlers; now and again a woman darting out with an angry objurgation to snatch in a vagrant child. He had been looking forward to his passing through the familiar streets as a sort of dream. Now it seemed strangely real. That sense of being at home that he

had never experienced in the vast wilderness of London had possession of him again; the accent of the people had a pleasant, almost pathetic touch in it; he seemed to know them so well, to have got back among old friends.

But he was not going to seek to see Miss Romayne that night, wildly as his heart beat when he thought of her being so near him—just over there in the darkness—little thinking of what was in store for her. No; he would wait for the morning; he would have nothing less than the fresh and clear May morning to show him the sudden, glad love-light leap into Kitty's wondering eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHEN ALL THE WORLD WAS YOUNG."

MASTER WILLIE was up and abroad early the next morning—too early, indeed, for anything but a stroll through the wide, empty, silent thoroughfares of Cork. It was a lovely morning; the sunlight shining clear on the tall fronts of the houses, and on the deserted streets; a light breeze from the south bringing with it suggestions of the sea; the silence only broken by the occasional soft tolling of a distant bell. Was it the stillness of this Sunday morning that made the place seem so strange?—for surely he had not been long enough in London to have forgotten these familiar streets. Or was the keen interest and even affection with which he regarded so well-known a thoroughfare as the South Mall, for example, due to far other causes? Suppose that as he walked along he did not

see this actual sunlight around him at all; suppose that instead he was imagining these pavements swimming wet on a dark and miserable week-day night; the cars rattling by and splashing mud; and two figures, closely holding together, arm-in-arm, under one umbrella? And suppose now that he sees one of these two look suddenly up to her companion with a quick, earnest gaze—a look of revelation, confession, complete surrender of love—a look that pledged her life away? For even the South Mall, in its canopy of darkness and rain, may enclose the rose-red, shining jewel of a love-secret.

So he walked hither and thither to pass the time away, half dreaming of these recent days that already seemed to be growing distant, until he found himself in the broad and winding thoroughfare of St. Patrick's Street, where more passers-by were now becoming visible. Was this, then, the part of the Beautiful City that he had tried to persuade Kitty was like Venice? He looked at the place with a new interest (comparing it with the Fulham Road) and perhaps also,

as he thought of Kitty, with a trifle of compunction. But at all events it was picturesque enough—these masses of tall, narrow, variously-built houses in all sorts of architecture; their slate fronts, their red-brick fronts, their plaster fronts, their stone fronts, their bow windows, flat windows, and French windows all shining in the sun; and their uneven sky-line sharp against the blue; and if he did make that bold comparison to Kitty, no doubt he pointed out to her that they were standing on an island; that there was actually water running below the street; the street itself leading down there to the canal-like Lee, with its busy quays and boats and bridges. He looked at his watch—it was half-past nine: would Kitty chance to have put on that pretty soft gray silk dress he was so fond of, with its touch of deep crimson here and there? Poor Kitty; she did not know he was down here by St. Patrick's bridge, looking at the boats.

He crossed the river and began to ascend leisurely enough the steep and rugged little thoroughfare leading to Audley Place. Every

step had an interest for him; he recognised every feature of it—the red road, the white walls hot in the sun, the soft green of the foliage, here and there the golden tresses of a laburnum hanging over from a garden. And Kitty had to toil up this steep ascent on the dark nights going home—sometimes getting wet, too, for want of a covered car. That was because the Prince had not found his bag of diamonds yet. Never mind: the world had not come to an end merely because Mr. Gifford did not like the review of "Daphne's Shadow;" and Kitty might have even something better than a covered car, all in due time.

At length he reached the little terrace on the top of the hill that is known as Audley Place; and he passed along to the end, so that Kitty should not see him prematurely; and leaned his arms on the red stone wall that enclosed a meadow, in the long grass of which rooks were loudly cawing. How well he knew the spacious picture that now lay before him; of Cork, and its surroundings, and the outlying country. The bulk of the

city, it is true, lay down there in the hollow to the left; a dishevelled heap of purple slate roofs softened over by a pale blue smoke; with masses of dark green foliage farther up the valley, and a glimmer here and there of the Lee. But then from the deep of this ravine the hill opposite him sloped gradually upward, the slate roofs becoming less and less dense, until in mid-air rose erect and tall and square the dark red tower of St. Anne's, which holds the Shandon bells; at the foot of it the little churchyard, with its gray stones, and the green and gold of grass and buttercups together. Then, still getting higher, the houses grow fewer; the sunlight catching here and there on a white gable among the gardens; the town loses itself in the country; there are lush meadows dotted with sheep; there are tall hedges powdered with hawthorn blossom; there is a farmhouse half hidden among the elms. And then, finally the long, softly undulating sky-line, brilliant in the sunny green of the spring-time, meets the tender aerial blue of the morning sky, and we reach the limits of

what is visible from the red stone wall or even from Kitty Romayne's window behind us.

Master Willie's heart was very full; for there was not a wide thoroughfare in that dusky city, no, nor a little bypath in the suburbs, nor a winding road leading through the fair green country beyond, that he and Kitty had not made themselves familiar with in their long perambulations. And Shandon tower over there—how could he forget the pretty speech she made him when he had casually said it was odd of the builders to have made this one side of it next them red and the other three sides gray? "I am going to be like Shandon steeple, Willie; and the rose-red side of my love will always be turned to you; and other people may think me gray if they like." Perhaps it was a trifle incoherent; but Kitty was not a literary person; and at all events he knew what she meant.

The slow hands of Shandon clock were now invisibly drawing towards half-past ten; and so he thought he would go round the

corner and await her there, where their meeting could be observed by no one. He paced up and down by this tall gray cheerless stone wall; and he wished the villain rooks would not make such a cawing. But nevertheless the silence was sufficient to let him hear the swinging of a gate. Then he listened—his heart like to choke him. Then—he could not tell how it happened—the world became just filled with a wild delight; for here was the identical soft gray dress, and the pretty little figure; and Kitty herself, who was passing him without looking up. But what was this? Was she crying? Was she trying to hide her face from any stranger?

"Kitty!—Kitty, what is the matter?"

She turned instantly—the wet eyes startled, her face grown suddenly pale; and then, after one second of wild bewilderment and joy, she threw herself sobbing and crying into his arms.

"Oh, it is you after all, Willie! I thought you were coming to-day; I thought of it all the morning; and then to come out and find no one——"

"But how could you think I was coming, my darling?" he cried.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," she said, almost wildly, "something in a letter, I think—see, I put on the dress you liked—I made so sure—but, but—oh, you have come to me after all, Willie"—and with that she kissed him, and kissed both his hands, and kissed the sleeve of his coat half-a-dozen times, holding his arm tight the while—"Oh, don't go away again, Willie! Don't leave me again! I cannot live without you—it is not living at all. You won't go away again, Willie, will you? We will live on nothing rather!"

The light that was shining in her eyes as she regarded him!

"And they haven't altered your looks a bit, Willie—not one bit. My bonny boy! Promise me you'll never, never, never go away again, Willie!"

"Well, you audacious creature!" he said, putting straight the pretty little gray hat with its crimson feather. "Whose fiery ambition was it sent me away?"

"Oh, but I've found out my fault; and haven't I cried enough about it too? I don't want any more ambition; I want you, Willie; and I'd work for you if I were to work my fingers off!"

But at this moment a smart young corporal having emerged from the gate of the barracks, came along the road, whistling "Garryowen" and twirling his small cane. So Kitty had to dry her eyes and look presentable; and she slipped her hand into her lover's arm: and they proceeded on their way—well-known to both of them.

"That is a most praiseworthy sentiment, Kitty," he said in answer to her proposal. "I suppose you would sing in the streets; and I could enjoy myself in an ale-house with a long pipe—isn't that how it generally ends? But now that I've begun, I'm going on; and some day or other Kitty won't have to get wet through in going home from a concert at night——"

"Oh, Willie, that is too cruel! Did I ever complain? What a stupid I was to mention it even——"

"Never mind. You see, I've got a very fair start, Kitty—four pounds a week for a half-mechanical kind of work that will leave me many chances of getting ahead in other directions. And what have you to say now, Miss Romayne, about the person you suspected so much? I think you ought to be grateful to him. I don't know any one else who would have so gone out of his way to befriend a stranger——"

"That's like you," said Miss Romayne, promptly. "You're too simple. My dearest, you think everybody's like yourself. Don't I see through your fine friend? Everything you have told me in your letters confirms it. I can see it. The fact is, he never thought about that magazine until he saw you at Inisheen; and then he thought he could make some use of such an unusual combination of knowledge of all kinds of out-of-door sports along with literary genius——"

"Hillo, Kitty; we're on the line of high phrases."

"Oh," she said coolly, "if you don't know what you are, I do. It was you who gave

him the idea of the magazine—I will wager anything——"

"A kiss?"

"Yes—and pay you now if you like."

By this time they had got to the end of Fairy Lane—which may be a Fairy Lane enough in certain circumstances, though as a matter-of-fact it has a gaunt stone wall on one side and a row of commonplace little cottages on the other—and were making their way round by the back of the barracks, by rugged little roads and crumbling walls and stunted hedges, to the open country.

"I say," continued Miss Romayne, "that he got the idea of that magazine from you. Gratitude, indeed! Where else could he have found any one fit for such a place? Where else could he have got any one who knows all about hounds, and horses, and salmon, and things like that; and who has the education, and ability, and humour of a delightful writer to make it all—all—all just delightful?"

"But wait a minute, Kitty," said he, "are

you so sure about all those nice things? I know I can shoot snipe——"

"And you once brought down a wild duck," said Kitty, demurely. "Crippled her entirely—she couldn't fly away a wee bit ever after."

"But I want you to be just to Hilton Clarke—but for the post he has given me do you think I'd be here this morning?—and I want to assure you, Kitty, that everybody doesn't regard my literary masterpieces as you do. I told you about the review I had written. Of course I should have been awfully glad to get an article in the *Liberal Review*—even if it had been only three times a year. I never dreamed of such a thing being possible——"

"Yes; but it is possible? You told me——"

"I called on Mr. Gifford on Friday. Oh, he wouldn't have it at all."

But Kitty was not the one to be daunted.

"The more fool he!" she said with decision. Nay, she stamped her little foot, and said: "And if he were here I would tell him

so! Why, these old fossils are all running in grooves——"

"But fossils don't run in grooves, Kitty."

"And they can't recognise fresh talent," she continued, not heeding him in her wrath. "How could they be expected to recognise yours? You haven't been brought up in libraries and inky dens all your life. You have been brought up face-to-face with the real things of the world—with the sea, and the sky, and dark nights, and the winter, and all about Inisheen that you have told me. That's living; that's not talking about living; or earning your bread by writing about what other people have said about living. What would Mr. Gifford have done when the ship came ashore at Kenvane Head? Do you think he could have scrambled down the cliffs to help the fishermen——"

"But his business is to write, Kitty——"

"It is not; it is to write about other people's writing," she said, promptly. "Why, I'd like to have seen him write that description of that very thing—the struggles of the fishermen, and then the captain's wife refusing

to be saved because her child was drowned. Would there have been any need to cry if *he* had written it? Would they have got up a subscription if *he* had written it? No, I think not. And I should like to see him try to throw a salmon-line thirty-five yards! And do you think he could have climbed up the face of the Priest's Rock with a gun in his hand?"

"But these things are not necessary to the editing of a paper, Kitty," said he, laughing. "And it's very kind of you to try and find excuses; but I am afraid the truth was that I wrote a bad review, and Mr. Gifford properly said no. Well, I was very downhearted about it——"

"You!" she exclaimed, with a smile of scepticism. "No, you can't make me believe that. The thing isn't in existence that is likely to turn your hair gray."

"Unless it's you yourself, Kitty?—what do you say to that? But I was; entirely down in my boots; for I'd rather see an article of mine printed in the *Liberal Review* than be made Lord Lieutenant and live at the

Castle. And then I walked along a bit; and then I thought that the hawthorn must be out about the woods and hedges here; and that you would be having your Sunday morning walk all alone; and then I said to myself, 'I'm going to see Kitty, whatever happens!'"

"And if it was Mr. Gifford that led you to say that, Willie, I'll forgive him; though I still think him a stupid person who doesn't know his own interests. Oh, I made so sure you would be at the gate this morning! You told me last week always to look out for the unexpected, or something like that; and what do I care to expect about, or think about, except you? I haven't had on this dress since you left; I thought I would keep it till you came back. Miss Patience said this morning, 'Catherine, why are you taking out that gray dress again?' and I said, 'Well, I can't have all my things saturated with camphor; I must take them out and air them sometimes.' And then when I came out and saw no one—I—I thought it was too bad. I don't know whether I was angry

with you, or with myself, or London and the tall yellow man——"

"Now, now, Kitty, none of that! How can you be spiteful on such a morning? See here is a bit of hawthorn; let me pin it on for you. I thought the hawthorn would be out. The hedges over there look as if there was snow on them."

By this time their arm-in-arm loiterings and meanderings had brought them within view of a spacious tract of country that lay fair in the warm and clear sunlight. The landscape, it is true, was somewhat marred by certain tall chimneys that rose in the valley below, with mountains of refuse hard by, and a coal-black railway line twisting through; but there was no need for them to look that way unless they liked. Here on these sunny uplands were still meadows all be-starred with daisies; and hedges white with the fresh-scented May; and over there were softly-foliaged woods all in the tender green of the springtime. Then the fair mansion on that distant hill—looking so white among the trees; had its stately repose any attraction

for youthful eyes and thoughts? Was there any dream of resting in some such place, away above the din of the world, after the fight and stress was over? Or rather, were not such ambitions quite unthought of? Was it not enough for them to have this still beautiful morning, the sunlight on the warm meadows, the skies blue above them; to have life, love, and youth; a pressure of the hand, a glance of kindly eyes, perhaps a swiftly-snatched kiss where the hedges were tall? For indeed the place was so still and silent on this fair morning that they were suddenly startled by a peculiar silken whistling noise in the air, and looking up they found that an equally startled rook had just flown over their heads and was already half-way across the meadow behind.

She stooped and picked a germander speedwell from the bank, kissed it, and gave it to him.

"It is just the colour of your eyes, Willie," she said. "They keep reminding me of you when I am out walking; and oh! it is so lonely walking now! I have to go over all

the things you ever said to me; it is my only company. I say to myself 'Here we quarrelled;' and again 'Here we made it up;' and 'There's the stile he helped me over, and caught me when I jumped down;' and 'Here's where the anemones used to grow, that he used to put in my hair.' Then on I go again; thinking of all the nice love-names you used to call me; and not a human being to say a civil word to one—nothing but the cows staring at you, and the flowers all occupied with their own business of drinking in the sunlight. And of course every one else you meet is sure to have a companion——"

"Never mind, Kitty," said he. "You'll have plenty of society in Dublin; you will have half the young officers from the barracks wanting to get introduced to you."

"Oh, indeed!" she said. "Indeed! I'd ask them if they had learned their drill yet; and if there wasn't one part of it called 'Right-about-face.' But it is very nice of you not to object to my going to Dublin, Willie. You see, it will be a six weeks'

engagement; and for me a six weeks' holiday as well; and no silk dresses, or gloves, or music, or bouquets to buy. And they say the picture of Killarney is quite lovely; and just imagine how effective it will be—the lights in the theatre all down; then the moonlight begins to show on Muckross Abbey, perhaps, or perhaps it's Innisfallen, and all the water begins to be silver, and then the orchestra plays a very slow accompaniment; and then—I am going to begin very softly—you hear 'By Killarney's lakes and fells' sung somewhere in the distance! You must imagine it to be a voice in the air; and won't I do my best with it when it is my boy's native country that it is all about! Ah, me, there won't be anybody then to sing my praises in the *Cork Chronicle*. It will no longer be reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of anything at all. No; the only one she ever cared to sing for will be far away; not thinking of her; but having fine dinners in his splendid rooms in London."

He burst out laughing.

"My splendid room in the Fulham Road, Kitty, is furnished with one table and two chairs, and is otherwise about as bare as a billiard-ball. You don't get much splendour for six shillings a week."

"Ah," she said, shyly, "if you had only stayed in Ireland, you might have had lodgings cheaper than that."

"Where?" he asked.

"You might," said she, very prettily, and with her eyes cast down, "you might have 'lived in my heart, and paid no rent.'"

However, not once during this long, delicious ramble along lanes, and by farmhouses, and through woods, did Miss Romayne recur to that first eager heart-cry of hers that he should give up his ambitious projects in London and come back to Ireland. For although she could make love very prettily, in a shy, tender, and bewitching fashion, she was nevertheless a sensible young woman; and she perceived that, whether she liked Mr. Hilton Clarke or not, he was affording her lover a very fair start in London literary life. No, she would not ask him to sacrifice

those prospects merely to gratify sentiment; but seeing that he was here—and seeing that merely to touch the sleeve of his coat, to know that he was beside her, was the greatest delight in the world to her—her first thought was how he and she could be most together.

"When do you go back, Willie?"

"To-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" she cried; and her face fell. "Must you?"

"My darling, I must; without a doubt."

"But this is dreadful, Willie. Am I only to see you for three hours—and—and the three hours nearly over——"

Her eyes began to fill; and her lips to tremble.

"What do you mean, Kitty? The whole day is before us——"

"There's dinner at two," she said, with her eyes turned aside from him, "and there's church in the afternoon; and then Miss Patience will expect me to stay in all the evening; and how can I see you? Three hours—and it may be years again——"

"Oh, but that won't do at all, Kitty," said he, cheerfully. "I haven't come all this way to spend a day with you, and have half of it cut off. Not a bit. I am going to call on Miss Patience. I am going to apologise for any and every offence that she can think of —for I'm sure I don't know what I've done. She may draw up a list as long as my arm— or as long as her face, which is longer—and I'll write at the foot of it '*Peccavi peccatum grande, et mihi conscius multorum delictorum, sed gratiâ Patientiæ*—that's through the favour of Miss Patience, Kitty—I've been acquitted."

Kitty's face rose again.

"And I think it could be managed, Willie, if you wouldn't mind being a little considerate. I have found out what made most of the mischief. You printed a letter of hers in the *Cork Chronicle*."

"I know I did; I thought she would be pleased."

"But she sent it anonymously."

"I only appended her initials. I recognised the handwriting; and it was a sensible

enough letter. I thought she would be pleased."

"But you don't understand, Willie; I must tell you about poor old Patience; though it is absurd. You see she takes a great interest in public affairs; and thinks she is in a good position for being an impartial adviser—not influenced by interested motives, you understand, Willie—and so she writes letters to the newspaper-editors throughout the country, and to the Cabinet ministers, and advises them. She writes and approves of what they've said; or she suggests things they should do; and of course sometimes they do do that, and then poor old Patience is very delightful to live with, for she'll let you do anything on these days. But then she believes that, if her name was known, all her influence in public affairs would fade away, for the public men would think she was wanting something from them; and so she writes anonymously. Then you must needs go and discover her secret, and put her initials to the letter——"

"There was no harm in the letter, Kitty.

It only said that on some particular question, I forget what, we were the only paper in the country that spoke the truth; and every editor likes to print letters like that."

"Then the very next day, I believe, you must needs go and say something about editors being plagued with correspondence; and that she took to herself——"

"I wasn't even thinking of her, Kitty; though anything more diabolical than a woman who spends her life in torturing editors and Cabinet ministers with continual writing to them——"

"Whish—sh—sh. Many a pleasant evening you owe to Miss Patience, young man. So now I'm going in to dinner. No, you mustn't think of it; I will manage it; men always bungle these things; and if you go and get your dinner, and be back about here at three, I will send you a message somehow as to how the weather looks. Oh, where are you staying, Willie?"

"At the Imperial."

"Sure, can't ye say the Impayrial?" remonstrated Miss Romayne. "Very well,

then, I will try to send a line to you there."

"Is it much use?" he asked. "I am coming to spend the afternoon with you, Kitty, whatever kind of weather there is."

"Go away, now, you headstrong boy. You may have command over Don Fierna and his pixies in that dreadful glen; but you don't know how to manage a woman's temper. Good-bye, Willie—oh, dear me, how I shall hate the sermon!"

"Good-bye, Kitty. Tell Miss Patience that I know quite well whose advice it was that induced the American Government to give up Mason and Slidell."

He went down to the Imperial, and got something to eat. He was not much distressed about what was going to happen; he would see Kitty that afternoon, and that evening too, despite all the female diplomatists in Ireland or out of it. But in about half-an-hour any little anxiety was dispelled by the following note, hastily scribbled in pencil, which was brought him by a shock-headed boy.

"My Dearest—I have mollyfied (*sic*) Miss Patience. She has said you might come to supper, at eight. If you are about the front of St. Anne's, when afternoon church comes out, I will go for a little walk with you; but let me leave Miss Patience first; she would not like an explanation in the street. Shall you be in the church? I will look out for you. Do, do be civil to her to-night.

"Your much obliged,

"Catherine the Incomprehensible."

So they had another long and delightful walk in the sunny afternoon; though this time they remained nearer the city, visiting various spots that were hallowed by their own wonderful experiences, and on one occasion standing mute to hear the distant chiming of Shandon Bells. Kitty was most interested in listening to the smallest details about his life in London; but nothing that he could urge could overcome her dislike—or jealousy, or whatever it was—of Hilton Clarke. This was the more unreasonable

that she had never spoken a word to him; and had only seen him once or twice in front of the inn at Inisheen. Even about his appearance, which to ordinary eyes seemed handsome and distinguished, nothing would please her. He looked finical. He looked supercilious. He stared impertinently. Wasn't his high priest his tailor? And so forth.

"But you shouldn't say that," Master Willie remonstrated. "He never said anything against you. No, he was quite complimentary. He called you an epichoriambic trimeter acatalectic."

"I'll take that with a little water, please; it's rather strong," she said, saucily.

"I wish you'd give over your concert-room slang!" said he.

"Oh, slang!" she said. "Slang! and what was that you said, then? Wasn't that slang, or worse?"

"It's the description of a verse in Horace —a verse that is just as musical and graceful as you yourself, Kitty, when you like to behave yourself, which isn't often. And if

you had any gratitude in your miserable little soul——"

"Oh, thank you," she said, snatching her hand away from his arm. "Mr. Impertinence, that's the way to your hotel. I'm going home."

But Kitty's wrath was usually evanescent; you had but to take her hand and she surrendered; and so it was that they were very soon climbing the steep little hill together, with much cheerfulness, in the gathering dusk, the while Kitty was lecturing her companion on the wisdom of consideration, and the advantages of politeness, and also hinting that, if he could but introduce the names of one or two distinguished political persons into his talk that evening, no harm would be done. And as it turned out, Miss Patience, who was a thin tall lady, with a somewhat dark face and severe gray eyes that made her look like a hawk, proved exceedingly placable. She avoided all reference to the quarrel. She hoped he was succeeding in London. Then she lit two candles and put them on the table of the little parlour; and

drew down the window-blind; and rang the bell for supper.

Master Willie returned her kind treatment of him with liberal interest. For when the little maidservant had come in to lay the cloth, and when she had placed thereon the cold beef, and salad, and cheese, and bottled stout, and when Miss Romayne had, in honour of her guest, lit two more candles and put them on the chimneypiece, then they all sate down to the modest banquet, and Fitzgerald proceeded to inform Miss Patience as to what was being thought in London concerning some topics of Imperial interest. And he listened with profound attention to her views on these wide subjects; although, it is true, she spoke with much caution, and even mystery, as though she were afraid of revealing secrets. She was anxious, above all, to know whether the public approved the line the *Times* was taking with regard to the Government; and also what sort of person the Editor of the *Times* was. Master Willie replied that he had met one or two highly distinguished literary people in London; but

not the Editor of the *Times;* who was no doubt, on account of his position and duties, one not easily approachable.

"There again Sir Rowland Hill comes in!" exclaimed Miss Patience triumphantly.

Fitzgerald looked puzzled.

"Think of how we are indebted to him," she continued—forgetting for the moment her mysterious manner—"for the diffusion of information, and for breaking down conventional barriers. Nowadays nobody has to bribe lacqueys to get to the great man's chamber. The penny post has done away with that. *That* is the messenger who cannot be denied. The humblest in the land can reach even to the throne."

Gracious heavens, thought Master Willie, has the woman been writing to the Queen? But all the same he agreed with her; the penny post was a noble institution; and if she referred to the Editor of the *Times* no doubt he was approachable that way. But Miss Patience, fixing her severe eyes on him, instantly disclaimed any such allusion. No; she declared she was merely thinking of the

system; and of its wonderful advantages of communication between humble people and the great. Then she grew mysterious again; and began to put dark questions to him about the probable effect of a certain Royal marriage then being talked of, and whether it was not high time that the voice of the people should be heard.

But the evening was not entirely given up to politics; for Miss Patience, with the kindest consideration, and under the protest of going to search for some papers in her own room, disappeared, and remained absent; and Kitty went to the little cottage piano; and her companion was not a great way off. Miss Romayne, if not a highly finished musician, was at least a sympathetic player; and well she knew the airs which would awaken the tenderest associations in her lover's heart. They were those that he had listened to when he and she were idling away the glad hours along country lanes or as they came home through Inisheen in the evening, thinking of all the things that life had in store for them together.

"And so the Irish people," she said, letting her fingers touch the keys very gently, "were not aware of the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon' until I revealed it to them?"

"I wasn't," said he, "and as I was the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*, hadn't I the right to speak in the name of the Irish people?"

"I wonder who first began to make words for these old tunes. I suppose the tunes were in existence ages ago. Oh, that wasn't much of a discovery, Master Willie, because everybody sees how the air can be made pathetic if you take pains with it; but what I am certain of is that another bell-song, 'The Bells of Aberdovey,' was originally not a sentimental thing at all, but a splendid battle-march of the old Britons. If this wasn't Sunday evening; and if I wasn't afraid of frightening the neighbours, I could let you hear something with 'The Bells of Aberdovey.' Now, there is a task for you; write a war-song for that splendid march—a war-song with a tramp in it and thunder!"

"Play 'Farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour,' Kitty," said he, gently. "You remember you sang it in the boat coming back to Inisheen?"

"Do I remember? Am I ever likely to forget that fearful night," said she, "when I signed my soul away to witches in the moonlight?"

But she played the air, nevertheless; very exquisitely and softly. And she played many more, wandering from one to the other, while he listened in silence and dreamed over again the mornings, and the clear days, and the silent twilights they had spent so happily together. And well she knew—for she also had a tender memory—that however familiar these airs might be to others, there was no commonplaceness about them for him. She played one and then another; but it seemed as if they were all speaking of the sea, and of Inisheen, and of glad days gone by. These two were together so close now; the world shut out and forgotten. Why should there be any cruel gray dawn; and a wide gray sea: and then a disappearance into the frightful loneliness of London?

But the parting had to come, nevertheless —out there by the small gate, under the stars. Kitty was crying a little bit; what was the use of his coming over for one day only to have all the old sorrow to go through again? And then he chid her gently. Had it not been a long, happy, idyllic day—something to look back upon, perhaps for years? Was it not enough that even now, under the clear shining stars, he could hold her warm little hands for yet one other minute, and listen to the smooth and tender voice that he knew? Perhaps Kitty would rather not have him come back, then?

"Oh yes, oh yes," the faltering voice said, and she drew him closer to her, "never mind about the excuse, Willie. To-morrow—Wednesday—next week—any day, any hour, come back to me! That's all I want! And it isn't so much; and other people seem to have everything they want; and they are not nearly as grateful as I should be. Ah, must you really go?"

But the last word took a long while in saying; and even after she had given him

the last kiss and the last blessing; and when she had watched him disappear away into the darkness of the night, she still stood by the little gate there, trying in vain to dry her eyes before going into the house again, and wondering why fate should be so cruel to some, while others were so happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

At length the fateful day arrived for the issuing to the British public of the first number of the new magazine, and Fitzgerald was glad to be able to draw a long breath of relief. During these past two or three weeks his labours had been indeed hard. He had been constituted a sort of intermediary between the managerial and the editorial departments, everybody wanting to hold him responsible for everything.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," the distressed manager would say, bringing him the proof of an article written by the editor. "Do look here, if you please. The 'vile decoctions being continually invented and supplied to the public in the shape of effervescing drinks.'"

"Well?" said Fitzgerald on that particu-

lar occasion. "Why not? where's the harm?"

"We've eleven different firms," cried the manager, almost in despair, "advertising their effervescing drinks and mineral waters!"

"They must imagine sporting people to be a thirsty race," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "Very well, I'll get Mr. Clarke to take the phrase out, if it's likely to hurt anybody."

Then again Mr. Scobell would call in some morning, perhaps with a proof of the same article in his hand.

"Look here, Fitzgerald. Look here, my dear f'lah. This won't do at all. You'll shock the public, I tell you you'll shock the public. Look at this—'that numerous and important section of the British wealthier classes who have long ago given up the fear of God, but who are kept in pretty fair social order by the fear of gout.' It won't do, Fitzgerald, I tell you it won't do. You must ask Clarke to cut that out. I told him I wouldn't have any d—d atheistical Radical stuff in a paper I was responsible for; I'm not going into sassiety as the pro-

prietor of a d—d Radical and atheistical journal."

But this was a far more serious matter, for if Hilton Clarke were to know that Mr. Scobell had been furnished with proofs of the articles, or had expressed any opinion about them, there would be the very mischief to pay. So Master Willie had to assure the capitalist that the most perverse ingenuity could not discover a trace of atheism or Radicalism in any one of the contributions that had been written for the *Household Magazine*, that Hilton Clarke would be perfectly astonished to hear of any such charge being brought against him, but at the same time, if there was a chance of any stupid person being offended by this chance remark of Hilton Clarke's, no doubt he, Clarke, would at once remove it.

Then he would go up to the Albany, and make some casual suggestions, in as pleasant a way as he could.

"Well, you see, Fitzgerald," Hilton Clarke said, promptly, in answer to these timid proposals, "I'm not going to edit the magazine

in the interests of the advertising department. They'll want us to puff pianos next, and write reviews of window-curtains. And what idiot could be offended by a little joke like that? We can't write down to the micro-cephalous. Where are you going now?"

"I am going to have some luncheon, I think."

"Ah," said his chief, regarding him, "I suppose you can afford to do that now. But it is not wise. Nothing so certainly destroys the figure in time. I don't know how many years it is now since I gave it up: nothing between eleven and eight is my rule. Oh, by the way, can you help me? have you sufficient ingenuity to suggest the kind of present one might buy for a lady—well, how am I to explain it? Something that will not be merely for vulgar use—such as she would have to buy in any case; and yet on the other hand something pretty that would not attract too much attention as a gift."

"I don't quite understand," said Fitzgerald.

"It is difficult to define," said the other, absently. "I have been puzzling over it my-

self. I daren't give her a piece of jewellery; for that would provoke questions. And of course I wouldn't give her a piece of furniture, or costume, or anything she would buy in the ordinary course with her husband's money. That's the difficulty, and I can't hit on the *juste milieu*. It must be ornamental enough for a gift, and yet something she might have bought for herself——"

"What about a cigar-case?" said Master Willie, at a venture.

The other laughed.

"Very well hit. You're not far from the mark. But I think a cigar-case would not precisely have the effect of staving off awkward questions. Well, if you are going to lunch, ta-ta! Be prudent, and you'll be thankful at forty that you've still got a waist."

Now Hilton Clarke had a vein of light facetiousness in his nature, and but little satire; moreover, he was good-natured in a selfish and indolent sort of way. But he never nearer reached a sharp satirical stroke than when he advised this poor lad, who was on the verge of starvation, not to destroy

his figure by over-eating and drinking. The fact was that despite the most rigid economies Fitzgerald's worldly wealth was reduced to a sum of a few shillings, and that was slowly diminishing. The Irish trip had cost nearer three than two pounds. His father had written asking for two pounds more to make up the money to meet the bill, and he had got it. Then on the remainder Fitzgerald had continued to exist, if not to live, during these past three weeks and more. He gave up his only luxury—that single glass of ale with his dinner. The amount of walking he did was incredible, for he had much hurrying to and fro, and he would not take an omnibus. The luncheon that Hilton Clarke had warned him against generally consisted of a biscuit, with sometimes an apple. And he had given up going in to see his artist friend John Ross, because he could not ask him in return to a banquet of tinned meat, bread, and beer.

His salary having begun four weeks before, the *Household Magazine* now owed him a sum of £16; and if that money had

been in the hands of Mr. Silas Earp, or owing to him by the proprietor, Mr. Scobell, he would not have had the slightest hesitation in making application for it. But somehow or other—he could not himself strictly analyse the feeling—it was impossible for him to go and ask for the money from Hilton Clarke, in whose hands he understood it was. He was certain that if Clarke knew he was in want of it, he would have it at once. No doubt it was owing to mere carelessness that he had not had it already. And to go and confess his need of it: would not that be almost like bringing a charge of want of consideration against one who had greatly befriended him? There may have been a little pride mixed up in this feeling; an indisposition to confess that, having scarcely a penny left in the world, he could not write home to his own people for supplies. But the chief notion he had was undoubtedly that such an appeal would cause Hilton Clarke to be vexed about his own thoughtlessness; and Fitzgerald was a trifle sensitive himself; and did not like the thought of giving that

pain to any one else. And so he contentedly trudged all over London (the printing offices were in the City Road) instead of taking omnibuses; and he lived on next to nothing; and gave up—but this was hard—his nightly chat with Ross, rather than make an application that would cause Hilton Clarke to accuse himself of inconsiderateness. This conduct may have been Quixotic; the only sure thing about it was that it could not go on for ever. That small stock of jealously-guarded shillings grew fatally smaller and smaller.

On the afternoon of the day on which the *Household Magazine* was finally issued, Hilton Clarke, Fitzgerald, Silas Earp, and Mr. Scobell left London by one of the afternoon boats for Greenwich, to dine there at the invitation of the last-named. It was not merely the prospect of having for once a substantial dinner that put Master Willie in good spirits. They were all in good spirits. So far as could be judged the new venture promised to be successful. The quantity of advertisements that had been secured was remarkable. The "trade" had subscribed

liberally for the first number; in fact, the last thing that had to be done before they went down to Charing Cross was to send word to the City Road to print a further five hundred copies. The poster, scarlet letters on a white ground, was effective; it was conspicuous on the hoardings they passed; and needless to say, they looked out for it. Mr. Scobell talked as if the whole scheme had been his own; and pooh-poohed his manager's cautious reminders to the effect that the advertisers were always willing to patronise a first number, and that the sale could not be even approximately gauged until they began to get back the "returns." The capitalist would not hear of any such qualifications. He was assured of success. The richer section of the public could not fail to see what an invaluable manual this would make. Even with a moderate sale the margin of profit at a shilling would be large. And so he paid for all their tickets to Greenwich.

Fitzgerald had not been down the Thames before, and to him it was a wonderful and a beautiful sight; the summer afternoon shining

warm on the masses of shipping, on the gray Tower, on the surging stream. And then, when they reached Greenwich and the hotel there, and when he went out on to the balcony of the little private room, there was something that was more than beautiful in the sunset streaming along the wide reach of the river. There was a touch of the pathetic in it. That very wideness suggested the nearness of the sea. And was not the sea the great bond of association with those who were far away? He thought of Inisheen; and that seemed sad; for now there would be no *Fairy Frigate*—that was the fanciful name that Kitty had given to the boat he and she used to go out to row in—there would be no *Fairy Frigate* gliding over the golden waters, with the blades of the oars shining in the sunlight as they dipped and rose again. Cannot you take her a message, then, you wide, rushing waters, and you, great ships, floating down with the dying day? Alas! the distance is too great; she is so far away she cannot hear; and there is one whose heart is so full of the thought of her, and so

burdened with the sadness of being remote from her, that he has not much of a mind for the festivities to which he is summoned within. A hand is laid on his shoulder.

"Twenty pounds that I can tell you what you are thinking of!" says Hilton Clarke.

Master Willie starts up from his reverie.

"She looks like a Norwegian," he says, "the barque there with the green hull."

And yet after all, when they had sat down to the very elaborate feast prepared within, and when their host was descanting on the merits of one or two of the wines he had ordered, the humour of the situation, so far as he, that is, Fitzgerald, was concerned, could not escape him. It seemed to him that all the dinners he had not had for the past month were now being offered him, when he could make no use of them. It looked ridiculous that one who had been living on next to nothing should find himself able, nay, constrained, to send away dish after dish only tasted, when tasted at all.

"To-morrow," he said to himself, "when I shall be feeling myself very hollow about

two o'clock, I shall be saying, 'What a fool I was, then, not to have had some more of that turbot!' This wine, now. Twelve shillings a bottle, I suppose. Six glasses to the bottle, probably; two shillings a glass. I drink it; and I have drunk what would have kept me in beer for a week. There is something wrong about the constitution of the human organism. When you can get plenty to eat and drink, you ought to be able to lay in a store against future need. What is the use of all this to me, if I am to be hungry again to-morrow?"

"Well, now, gentlemen," said he of the red face and the bristly yellow-white whiskers, as he held up a glass of wine between him and the light and then put it on the table again, "I did not ask you to come to Greenwich to talk business; but I think we are entitled to congratulate ourselves all round, I do really. I say it's a deuced good-looking periodical we've turned out. I call it a respectable-looking, a gentlemanly sort of looking magazine. I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed to have it lying in my draw-

ing-room, and when any one comes in I'm not ashamed if they take it up. What I say is, give a good thing, and charge a good price. I think twelve shillings is too much for this champagne, as I tell ye; but I consider it's as good a glass of wine as any I've got in my own cellar, and so I don't grumble. I'm for having good things. Give people good things; and they'll pay. A shilling a week is a good lot; but it looks respectable to have a thing like that lying about; it looks as if you wanted a country-house or a steam-yacht, and were looking out. My wife had it lying in her drawing-room yesterday when Lady Ipswich called; and Lady Ipswich said she'd order it from her bookseller at once. Now that's what I like; I want to have it talked about in sassiety. And I hope, Clarke, your friend Gifford will give us a flaming article about it; I'd have asked him to come down to-day, but I thought we'd better be private. I suppose you'll drop him a line?"

"Mr. Gifford," said Hilton Clarke, with a slight emphasis on the "Mr.," "is peculiar. It would be better to leave him to discover

the extraordinary merits of the shilling's worth for himself. Oh, talking of discoveries, Fitzgerald," he added, turning to his neighbour, "did you read the review of 'Daphne's Shadow'?"

Fitzgerald, with a sudden flush, admitted that he had; but Hilton Clarke, not perceiving his embarrassment, or whatever it might have been, laughed lightly.

"That was the *Liberal Review* all over. The most portentous discoveries! The well-known this and the well-known that under thin disguises: a wonderful study of contemporary life and society in England——"

"Then have you read the book? Do you think it is trumpery?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly; he was so anxious to justify himself to himself.

"The book!" said Hilton Clarke, with a sort of good-natured scorn. "To call such a thing a book. Twopence-halfpenny-worth of persiflage; the rest of the coppers in cheek; then throw in a few allusions to current politics; and the British public will take your mere names as types of English character.

What Gifford will do about our magazine it is imposible to say. He may think it trivial. He may regard it as the servant of Mammon; and he is not too well-affected towards the rich. But one can't say. He may make a discovery about it; about the possibility of converting fox-hunters to the study of higher things—who knows? And then when he gets into a tempest of conviction, he rides the whirlwind. He'd be willing to see half the human race hanged to show the other half that capital punishment was a mistake."

Well, human nature is but human nature, after all; and it is possible that Fitzgerald, after that rejection of his anxiously written article, may not have been so quick as he would otherwise have been to resent these scornful taunts that Hilton Clarke occasionally directed against the *Liberal Review* and its editor. But none of these affected Master Willie's secret consciousness that, if the two ways of regarding human life were offered him as alternatives, he would rather have that of the *Liberal Review* than that of the *Weekly Gazette*. The most desperate thing

in the world seemed to him to be hopelessness. Your conviction might be wrong; but at least it gave you something to look forward for. And at twenty-three one is busier with the future than the past.

The evening went on pleasantly enough; and coffee and cigars did not tend to diminish that halo of success which already seemed to surround the new magazine. Indeed, so satisfied was Mr. Scobell with the gentlemanly appearance of the periodical, and with his own relations to the enterprise, that he broadly hinted his intention of sharing any great increase of prosperity with these coadjutors of his.

"I am not a money-grubber," said he, leaning back in his chair to watch the smoke ascend. "I don't worship the golden calf. I like to have plenty of money; and I have plenty of money——"

"I wish some more of us could say as much," said Hilton Clarke; but the remark was an unfair one, for Mr. Scobell was not really boasting of his wealth.

"I was going to say," continued the

capitalist, glancing at Clarke somewhat reproachfully, "that I have plenty of money because I am not an extravagant man. I think when a man has a thorough well-managed establishment in town, a good cook and a good cellar, a couple of hacks for the park, a barouche for his wife, and then, don't you know, a snug little place in the country, where he can keep a good glass of wine for his friends, and give them a day through the turnips, or a mount if they are hunting men, don't you know, I say he should be content, and not want to win the Derby or have the biggest deer-forest in Scotland. I haven't gone into literature to make money, not I. What I say is, if it is a big success, let them share it who made it——"

"Then Fitzgerald should have three-fourths," said Hilton Clarke, with a laugh, "for he has done three-fourths of the work."

"I don't say I wouldn't take a fair return for my money," said Mr. Scobell, grandly. "I don't say that. But when I go into literature, it isn't to make money. I want to have my name connected with a thorough

good thing. I don't want to go into my club, and hear men say, 'That's Scobell; he's the proprietor of a d—d low Radical print.' I say we should stick up for our own country. I don't see any better. If there's a country where you'll find better fighting men, and handsomer women—ay, and horses too—well, I don't know where it is. I think we are very well off. You can get the best of everything in London, if you'll only pay a fair price for it. Look at Covent Garden now; what is there you can't get there? And then you get a lot of low trades-unionists and Radicals trying to stir up discontent; and setting class against class; and trying to put a lot of stuff into the heads of the farm-labourers. What I say is, let well alone. I don't see any other country better governed. I don't see any other country better off. If Church and State have brought us where we are, then I'm for Church and State; I want none o' their Liberty, Equality, and Stupidity. I say we're precious well off."

"You are, my dear Scobell, but I am not," observed Hilton Clarke, pleasantly. "How-

ever, you need have no fear of the *Household Magazine* adventuring on these troubled waters. We will assume that everything is for the best in this favoured island; and in the meantime we had better think of getting to the railway-station."

Here Mr. Earp, who was a large, heavy, bilious-looking man, and who had scarcely spoken all the evening, looked at his watch.

"There is one thing I would like to mention," he said, slowly. "Very soon people will be leaving town."

"Doubtless," said Hilton Clarke, whom he now particularly addressed.

"And you may be drawing attention to it in an article—perhaps more than once," the melancholy-looking man continued.

"Well, that is possible."

"Well, Mr. Clarke," said the other, hesitatingly, "if it is all the same to you, I would rather not have any such article. It is, if I may say so, imprudent. All the daily papers do it. They have articles about London being empty; about the dead season; about everybody being abroad. And then, you see, how

can you ask the advertisers to keep on paying money, when you're telling them at the same time that everybody is away?"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Mr. Clarke as he rose from the table. "It is the advertisers you are thinking of?" And then he laughed, and put his hand on Fitzgerald's shoulder as they left the room together. "There, Fitzgerald, don't forget these hints. Rules for the editing of a newspaper they might be called. 'Uphold Church and State; and in August don't remind advertisers that people have left town.'"

"We might have them printed and hung up in the office, for the guidance of contributors," said his companion.

They returned to town apparently very well pleased with each other and with the prospects of the new periodical. But just before reaching Charing Cross something occurred which was calculated to give Fitzgerald a still more favourable recollection of that evening.

"I suppose you'll take a Hansom, Fitzgerald?" Hilton Clarke asked of him, casually.

"No; I'll walk," was the reply.

"Walk? To Fulham?"

"To the Fulham Road, at least."

It is impossible to say whether or no this answer may have suggested to Hilton Clarke some suspicion about Fitzgerald's circumstances, but at all events he said, a minute after, and apparently without premeditation—

"Oh, I quite forgot, Fitzgerald, that you've drawn nothing from the treasury during these past weeks. That was my forgetfulness; for I am responsible to you. Why didn't you remind me——"

"It was of no consequence," said Fitzgerald, hastily; but how glad he was that Hilton Clarke had not had to be reminded!

"Well, then, shall I give you something on account? Oh, don't be bashful, man! This is a business evening. I should not have been so remiss——"

"It is of no consequence at all!" said Fitzgerald again; it was quite enough for him that his friend had remembered. He had had enough eating and drinking for a time. He would willingly go back to dry biscuits and apples.

"When I was your age I knew what it was to be hard up," continued Hilton Clarke, "and sometimes I know it now when pay-masters are neglectful. So I'm not going to incur that charge, whilst I remember. But I find I've only a sovereign or two. Scobell, lend me ten pounds, like a good fellow: Earp can score it up against me at the office."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Scobell, though he seemed a little surprised on hearing that Fitzgerald had up to that moment received no salary.

The two bank-notes were handed to Clarke, who in turn passed them on, and Fitzgerald so far from having any hesitation about accepting them, was altogether delighted. He had looked forward with the utmost shrinking to the obvious necessity, sooner or later, of having to recall Hilton Clarke to a sense of his carelessness. It was now clear to him that Mr. Clarke would so have regarded an application from him—as a reminder that he had been culpably neglectful. And now to find this deplorable thing removed was an inexpressible relief; and

the first thought he had was that he would invest a portion of this sum in paying for a ride on an omnibus, get home quickly, and see if John Ross were still awake and at work, that he might, as he surely would, rejoice in the good fortune of his nearest neighbour.

When Fitzgerald reached the little court-yard in the Fulham Road, there was no doubt possible about Ross's being at home, whether he was at work or no, for loud and martial strains were resounding through the big empty studio. It was with the utmost difficulty that Fitzgerald could make himself heard. Then the bawling suddenly ceased, and the door was opened.

"Come in, man; come in; what's the need o' ceremony? What for did ye wait to knock?"

"I heard the end of 'Scots wha hae' by waiting," said Master Willie, getting a chair for himself.

"Ay," said his host, fetching him a canister of tobacco. "I'm thinking King Edward, poor man, thought he was never going to hear the end o' they Scotch folk while he

was alive. I daresay whenever he found himself with nothing to do—wi' half an hour to spare, like—he would say to his friends, 'Come and let us sit down and curse Scotland.' Well, now, what have ye been about; what has come over ye?"

"I have been very busy; but the magazine I was telling you about has come out at last; and to-night I have just got back from a dinner at Greenwich which was meant to celebrate the occasion."

"But ye're sober!" exclaimed the other.

"Why not?"

"What's the use o' going all that way for a dinner if ye come home sober? Ay," said he, regarding him critically, "but if they've sent ye back sober, they've put an extra bit o' colour in your cheeks. It's no often one sees colour like that in London. It's no a London complexion at a', it reminds one more o' a cornfield in summer, and a strapping young fellow lying by the side of a stook, wi' his face half-turned away frae the sun. Man, I'd like to have a try at your head. You go on smoking; and let me hear all

your story since I saw ye last. I'd just like to have a try."

He threw aside his pipe; and quickly stuck on his easel a sheet of light-brown board, and took up his palette and colours. And then he began to walk up and down a bit, ultimately putting colours on the palette, and studying Fitzgerald's head from different points of view."

"Man," he said, "ye've more character about ye than I thought. Ye'll have a fine head when ye grow up."

Fitzgerald thought he had done growing, as he was three and twenty, and five foot ten. But by this time he was familiar with Ross's way of working, and with the jerky observations with which he usually accompanied that, and so he did not interrupt. After a while, Ross suddenly went to a portfolio that stood near the wall, and after having rudely tumbled about a number of sheets he brought back a large and dusty photograph—of Giorgione's armed warrior in the Uffizi.

"That's what your head 'll be in middle age."

"That! I don't see the least likeness," said Fitzgerald.

"But I do. It's my business. Of course you'll no be dark like that; but that's your nose and forehead. Ay, and the mouth, too. But the complexion makes a great difference; and the hair; have ye been burning yourself in the sun a' the day? Where got ye that straight nose in Ireland?"

"I suppose there are as many there as elsewhere," said Fitzgerald, trying to steal a look at the board on the easel, but failing.

"I dinna believe ye," said Ross, who was now working very eagerly—with snatches of contemplative whistling coming in at intervals. "I've watched the shearers that come over from Belfast. There's no one in twenty that escapes from the general type—the turned-up nose and long upper lip. Ay, and so the wonderful new magazine's out. Well, tell us all about it, man; ye need no be feared about altering your expression; it's only the tan o' the sunlight I'm trying at, though whether I can do anything—but there's no two curls o' your hair the same colour, man!

What do ye mean by that? There's an inconsistency about ye that's aggravating. Well, about the magazine?"

So Fitzgerald told him all that had happened; and dwelt on his great good fortune in having been able to make so early a start in London, thanks to one or two kind friends; and said how everybody was pleased at the prospects of this venture.

"Ay, ay," said the broad-shouldered, red-bearded little man as he stepped back a yard or two from the easel, and regarded his handiwork, "and that may partly account for the colour, as well as the warm day, and the trip to Greenwich. The flush of success, eh? And I warrant there's a young lass somewhere that's just as pleased as yoursel'. . ."

Then he suddenly bawled out in a prodigious and raucous voice—looking intently at his work the while—

> "And we'll take a right gude willie-waught
> For the days o' auld langsyne!"

However, this vocal outburst was not the result of self-satisfaction.

"What put it into my head," he continued, in a series of inconsecutive growls, as he stepped back and then stepped forward, and then bit the end of his brush, "to try such a blaze of flesh-colour? It's the most infernal thing in the world. I'm a landscape painter; at least I say I am; I think I'll take to house-fronts and door-steps. The portrait-painting I can do is a wee dabbie o' red and white under an auld wife's cap if she's coming along the road about twa miles off.

'And we'll take a right gude willie-waught'——"

But there was no joy left in the jovial song: nothing but perplexity and irritation.

"Don't bother about it to-night," said Master Willie. "Let's have a quiet smoke and a chat."

The next thing he saw was Ross suddenly advance and with one stroke drive his fist right through the frail board, sending the easel and everything flying and sprawling across the room. Then that action having apparently assuaged his passion, he quietly

took the palette from the thumb of his left hand and laid it down.

"I'm a failure," he said, drawing along a chair to the bare wooden table. "Nothing I try will do. Ye are one o' the lucky ones; only ye dinna ken the contentment there is in a glass o' good Scotch whisky. I do. But d'ye think I'm to be cast down because I canna pent? No while I can light a pipe!"

"But it's nonsense your talking like that!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, who had been privileged to look over these canvases, and who, little as he knew about painting, had been greatly struck with the strangely vivid effects he saw here and there, along with, as he imagined, an absolute want of definite construction, or technical skill. Amid all this confused chaos of impressions—which he was not surprised the dealers had for the most part regarded as quite hopeless—he had seen bits that were to him a sort of revelation. Moreover, he had gone out once or twice into the country with John Ross; he had listened to his talk; had watched the things he had

pointed out; and it seemed to him that the world had grown a great deal more interesting since this red-haired Scotchman had taught him how to look at it.

"It is nonsense your talking like that," repeated Fitzgerald. "And very soon the world will find out, and will tell you, whether you can paint or not."

"But do I complain?" said the other, fetching over some fresh water and a tumbler. "Do I howl? Have ye seen me lie down on the floor and squeal? Bless the laddie, I've my wits left. And I'm thinking that now this machine o' yours is fairly on the rails, ye'd better have a day's holiday the morn; and I'll take ye and show ye as fine a bit o' wilderness within five miles o' this very place as ye'd want to find in Canada. Will ye go?"

"Won't I!" said Master Willie, who had discovered that a walk in the country with this keen-eyed, talkative, dogmatic person was in itself a sort of liberal education. But then again he added; "No: not to-morrow. We will put it off for a few days, till I see how this thing is really going."

"You are as cautious as a Scotchman!" said his friend, with a laugh. "Well, here's to the magazine, and to you, and to all good fellows; and may the black deil be aye a long way away from us!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN STRAITS.

The high hopes that had been raised by the demand for the first number of the *Household Magazine* were very speedily abated. An ominously large number of the copies came back unsold from the newsvendors. Worse than that, as week after week passed, the small minimum circulation on which, after these returns, they had calculated, showed signs of still further shrinking. In these disheartening circumstances it must be said for Mr. Scobell that he played a man's part; he accused nobody; he was not dismayed; nay, he ventured even yet to hope.

"Rome wasn't built in a day," he would say. "A shillin's a good lot. And if the public won't buy it, at all events we've done our best. I'm not ashamed of it when I see it on a bookstall. I'm not ashamed to see it lying on the

table of my club. I say there's nothing to be ashamed of about it; I call it a gentlemanly looking thing. We'll have to be content with small beginnings. Mind, a shillin's a shillin'."

Hilton Clarke, on the other hand, was disappointed, and inclined to be peevish, and openly laid the blame on the management. There was no pushing of the magazine. They had not spent enough money in advertising. Indeed, he very soon showed that he was hopeless of the whole affair; and it was only by the exercise of much tact that Fitzgerald kept him, as far as he could be kept, to his duties as editor.

With Fitzgerald, however, he remained great friends; and it was Master Willie's privilege to listen for many a half-hour together to his companion's ingenious and clever talking, that was full of a very curious and subtle penetration in literary matters. Once or twice it almost seemed to him a pity that a man who could talk so well should not write a little more; and indeed on one occasion he went the length of hinting to Mr. Hilton Clarke that the world had

a right to expect from him some more definite work than he had already done. They were walking in Hyde Park.

"You mean some substantive publication?" said he, as he crumbled up some bread he had brought with him and began to throw it to the ducks in the Serpentine; this being a favourite amusement of his. "I doubt whether the public care much about viewy books. They can manage an essay now and again. I have thought of it, though. I could bring together two or three things I have written, under some such title as 'Laws and Limitations of Art.'"

"Why not?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly. Here, indeed, would be something he could triumphantly place before Kitty. No longer would she be able to ask of his literary hero "What has he done?" "I am sure it would be most interesting," he continued. "I am sure no one could make such a subject more interesting; and it wants clearness; there is so much confusion about it——"

"But some day or other——"

"That is what you are always saying!"

"Wait a bit. I say some day or other I mean to tackle something with a trifle more of human nature in it. I might begin it in the *Household Magazine*, only it would be thrown away on squires. Perhaps it would not run to a book."

"But the subject?"

"The Private Meditations of Zenobia's Husband."

"Zenobia's Husband——?"

"I forget what the gentleman's name was; most people do; that's the point of the situation. But you remember that the lovely and virtuous Queen of Palmyra *had* a husband; and he must have had his own little thoughts about things. I suppose now," he continued, throwing away the last of the crumbs, and linking his arm in his companion's as they set out again, "I suppose now you think that before writing such a book I ought to go and qualify by marrying somebody."

"You might do worse."

"I doubt it. I shall never marry. Life is only endurable when you have all round

you an atmosphere of possibility. Then the unexpected may happen; each new day may bring new relations. But when you marry your fate is fixed; life is closed; the romance of it vanished——"

"But what do you call the romance of it?" said Fitzgerald, bluntly. "Going philandering after another man's wife?"

"I perceive, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Hilton Clarke, blandly, "that on one occasion I must have been indiscreet. However, as you don't even know the name of the lady of the cigars no great harm has been done. Feuerbach, if you remember, maintains that a being without attributes is non-existent. Now a person whose sole attribute, so far as you know, is that she smokes cigars, can only exist a very little bit, as far as you are concerned. The Lady Irmingarde, now: she wouldn't allow even a cigarette to sully the purity of her sweet mountain air?"

"The Lady Irmingarde?" Fitzgerald repeated, innocently.

"I can imagine her. A coquettish nose; very blue eyes; a little freckled; a mis-

chievous laugh; and a figure that would go charmingly in a short dress, with a milking-pail."

"It doesn't take much trouble to imagine all that," said Fitzgerald. "You can see it any day in an operetta."

"Well, you know, some prefer the maid with the milking-pail; while some prefer a woman of the world, with wit and courage and dexterity, as well as beauty. Don't let us quarrel. In fact, Fitzgerald," he said, in a franker way of speaking, but still with that careless air, "I am rather in a muddle. Who was it who said 'My mind to me a kingdom is?' My kingdom, I know, sometimes gets very rebellious—tries to push me off the throne, in fact. If it doesn't take care, I'll abdicate altogether. And so, to let matters settle down a little, I am going to retreat for a while to Dover. I was thinking of running down this afternoon——"

"But the article for to-morrow!" exclaimed his assistant-editor.

"Oh, you can get something or other—do, like a good fellow. Print one of your

'Confessions of a Young Man.' I think they are excellent. It won't be throwing much away; for you can forward it to a publisher, and ask him to judge of the bulk by the sample. It will look better in type. You won't mind sacrificing one of them; and I'll do as much for you some other time."

This was the last of Hilton Clarke that Fitzgerald saw for many a day; and after his chief's departure for Dover he very speedily found that the whole work of editing the magazine and writing the literary section of it had to be borne on his own shoulders. Occasionally a few contributions would be sent up from the Lord Warden hotel; but they were slight and unimportant. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald would not admit even to himself that this conduct showed any want of consideration on the part of his friend and hero. What if this seclusion were to lead to the production of one or other of those books that had been vaguely indicated? Ought he not to be proud to have the chance of lending a helping hand

in this way? Or—for this suspicion would crop up from time to time—suppose that Hilton Clarke had got into some delicate entanglement in London from which the only sure escape was his prolonged absence from town? Master Willie worked away as hard as he could; and bore with equanimity the remonstrances of Mr. Scobell about the absence of the editor; and sacrificed not one only but several of the "Confessions of a Young Man," and tried to give the best account he could of his circumstances in his long letters to Kitty.

There was one very serious consideration, however, that could not be speciously glossed over; he was again almost penniless. Not even in leaving London had Hilton Clarke made any reference to money matters; though by that time he was very considerably in Fitzgerald's debt. For all his work on the Magazine the latter had received nothing beyond the ten pounds Hilton Clarke had handed over on the journey back from Greenwich; and that sum, welcome as it was, could not be expected to

last for ever, even if Kitty's birthday had not intervened, demanding a little souvenir. Sovereign after sovereign went, despite the most rigid economy. Again and again the dire necessity of having to remind Hilton Clarke of his thoughtlessness arose before his mind; and again and again he would put that off for a few days, making sure that Clarke would remember and write to him of his own accord. He had himself to blame. It was not a proper arrangement. He ought to have insisted on being put on some definite footing at the office, instead of being thus contracted out, as it were. That Hilton Clarke had drawn the full sum, month by month, he knew; for Mr. Silas Earp had casually mentioned it. It was beyond measure distressing to him to think of his friend being thus cruelly inconsiderate; but he held his peace; and went on with his work; and hoped for the best.

One night he was sitting alone, and perhaps rather down-hearted, for he had had no letter from Kitty these two days back, when he heard his Scotch friend ascending the

stairs outside. John Ross had been for some time absent, sketching up the Thames; and the solitary lodging in the Fulham Road had been even more solitary since his departure. Master Willie was glad to hear that brisk footstep outside.

Then the sharp-eyed little red-haired man came into the room; and seemed to take in the whole situation at a glance.

"What's the matter with ye, man? Hard work? The London air? Are ye in the dumps about some young lass?"

"Well," said Fitzgerald, brightening up, "maybe I have been working too hard. The magazine isn't a very great success so far, you know. I have been offering some things in one or two other quarters; but it's like trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle."

"Time enough; time enough," said John Ross. "Your face is no the right colour."

Then he glanced suspiciously around.

"Where's your supper?" he said, abruptly.

Fitzgerald flushed, and said hastily—

"Oh, supper? supper? It isn't nine yet, is it?"

"It's nearer ten. Now, look here, my lad; you come down the stairs with me, and I'll show ye something. A fellow has sent me a kippered salmon frae the Solway, and if ye've never tasted a kippered salmon, then ye dinna ken how bountiful Providence has been to mortals. Come away down, man, and I'll brander ye a steak that'll make your mouth water—to say nothing o' your een, if ye happen to come across a wee bit lump o' pepper."

He would hear of no excuse; he carried off Fitzgerald; went below and lit the gas in the big, gaunt studio; also the stove; laid the table; cut a couple of steaks from the firm, ruddy-brown fish, and put them on the gridiron; fetched tumblers and bottles; and then, as he stood over the gridiron, and turned the salmon-steaks with a fork, he regaled his companion with "Auld Lang-syne," one line whistled, the next sung, with occasionally a bit of a double-shuffle coming in. It was clear that he was in very excellent spirits, or pretended to be.

Then when he had popped the frizzling

hot steaks on a plate, and put them on the table, he drew in a couple of chairs.

"Come away, my boy. Pass the bread. Fitz, my laddie, I'm going to ask ye an impertinent question. Have ye got any money?"

He affected to be very busy in cutting the loaf, and fetching a couple of lemons, and so on, so that he should not see any embarrassment his companion might betray.

"Not very much," was the answer, with a doubtful kind of laugh.

"I dinna want to borrow. I want ye to tell me if you've got any, that's all."

"As I say, I haven't very much."

"Have ye got any?" said the other, pertinaciously, and for a moment fixing his keen eyes on him.

"I've got four shillings," said Fitzgerald. "It isn't what you might call a princely fortune; but while I have it I sha'n't starve."

"Are ye so sure o' that?" said John Ross, pretending to be much occupied with the lemon he held. "I'm thinking ye *have* been starving yourself. Now I'm flush.

And it's so seldom in my life I've had ower much money, I'd just like to try the effect o' lending ye a pound or two. Just think o' the luck! Just tell me this is anything but luck! There am I sitting in front o' the inn one afternoon, having a pipe, and little else to do. 'Landlord,' says I, 'get down your sign, man, and I'll repaint it for you.' Away the fat old fellow goes, and fetches a ladder, and down comes the rickety old board. Then soap and water; and a rub ower with megilp. Man, I took a fancy to the thing; the sodjer's red coat was fine, and I put in some trees, beside the inn, and a bit of a glimmer o' sunlight down the road. Ma certes, when it was dry, and hung up on the iron rod again, it looked fine, I can tell ye! And that very afternoon—just think of the luck o't!—by comes a gentleman, and he wants a drink o' meal and water for his horse, and he begins to ask the landlord about the sign, and what does the fellow do but ask him to go in and look at my sketches? —me away down the river at the time in a punt. And then the upshot was that he

bought two at £10 a piece; that was £20; and if the half o' that would be of use to you, ye're welcome to the loan of it, and may ye live until I ask ye for it."

Fitzgerald was deeply touched by this kindness on the part of one who knew almost nothing about him. What, indeed, could Ross know? It is true, the lad had clear and honest eyes, that were likely to win the confidence of a stranger; but it is more probable that this friendly offer was in great measure the result of that sort of subtle freemasonry that seems to exist among those who have a romantic affection for out-of-door sports and sights and sounds, and who have had opportunities of talking over these together.

"Are ye proud?" said John Ross, sharply.

"I don't know how to thank you," said Fitzgerald, simply. "I—I think it is tremendously kind of you. I would take it in a minute if there was need——"

"How long do ye expect to live on four shillings?" demanded the other.

But then Fitzgerald proceeded to explain

how there was a very considerable sum of money owing to him, and how from day to day he had been expecting it, or part of it.

"Bless me, laddie, ye seem to be clean daft!" Ross cried. "To go starving yourself deliberately, out o' sensitiveness for another man's feelings! Let him be as sensitive about you, to begin with! Nonsense, nonsense, man; get hold o' the money at once! I would make a hundred and fifty applications for it before I'd let both soul and body get down into my boots. The picture ye were when I went up to your room a while since! A snuff for his fine feelings——"

"Oh, but you don't know how grateful I ought to be to this Hilton Clarke," contended Fitzgerald, cheerfully. "Mind you, I've just been finding out for myself how difficult it is to get an entrance into London literature. And you see through him I got employment right at the beginning——"

"What on earth is the use of employment that ye're no paid for?"

"But the money is there. I can have it for the asking."

"In God's name ask for it then!" said his emphatic companion. "I dinna want to have to attend a funeral. A nice thing it would be for me to ken ye were just over my head, lying in a wooden box. No more kippered salmon for ye then. No more ale for ye—it's pretty clear, isn't it? No more long letters from a young lass somewhere. It's no *that* that's putting ye out?" he added, with another sharp glance.

"No, no; there's no trouble there," said Fitzgerald, brightly. "Nor indeed anywhere. I will hang on as long as I can with my four shillings; then, if I don't hear by that time, I will write. Now we will light up; and you will let me see the sketches you have brought back from the Thames."

They lit their pipes. But before fetching the canvases, Ross stepped over to a dusky recess, and brought back a brace of wild-duck—both beautiful-plumaged mallard—and threw them down.

"There," said he, "that's better than sketches. Take them with ye, since ye're bent on starving yourself. Bonnie birds, aren't they? That shows ye the use o' having a gun lying beside ye when ye're sketching in a punt."

"If you'd only bring some whiskey with you," said Fitzgerald, laughing, "I think I could afford to ask you to have some dinner with me to-morrow night."

"But I will," responded his companion, seriously. "Dinner or supper or what ye like. And the next night as well, if ye're willin'; I'll see ye have two good meals before they make a corpse o' ye; and one wild-duck makes a good enough dinner, an excellent dinner, for two folk. Eh, man, if I had had a bit spaniel wi' me! Many's and many's the time I heard the duck quite close by me in the rushes, dipping their bills and flapping their wings. Then away would go the mallard with a whirr like a policeman's rattle; and then you'd hear the mother quack, quacking to the brood. Catch her leaving them till she had got them hidden

somewhere! The drake I'm thinking is like the buck rabbit; catch a buck rabbit warning anybody, so long as he can show a clean pair o' heels and a white fud; but the doe, when ye startle her, down comes her hind legs on the ground with a whack ye can hear a hundred yards off, and if the young ones dinna take heed o' that they deserve what they're likely to get."

"Yes—but the sketches?" suggested Fitzgerald.

His companion had contentedly sat down again.

"Oh, ay. I got some work done; I did a good deal o' work. Did ye ever see a kingfisher fishing?"

"No; they're not common with us in the south of Ireland."

"Man, I watched one for near half-an-hour last week; and the whole o' that time he never stirred a feather. He was on a stone, or may be it was a withered stump, under a bush that was hanging ower the watter. I was beginning to doubt but that somebody had stuffed him, and put him there

to make a fool o' folk, when snap! down went his head and neck, and the next second there he was with a small fish crosswise in his beak. Then he twitched his head, or maybe he was striking the fish on the stump; then there was no fish visible; and then a kind o' streak o' blue flame went down across the rushes; that was the gentleman himself going off in a flash o' glory, as it were."

"Did you put him in your sketch?" asked Fitzgerald, insidiously.

"It's an ungainly kind o' a beast, too," continued John Ross, taking no heed of the hint. "Stumpy in shape. And there are too many colours when he's standing still like that. But once he's well on the wing you see nothing but blue—just a flash o' blue fire, that's fine enough when it crosses a long, standing clump o' yellow rushes; but then again when it crosses a dark bit o' shadow it's more than that; it gives a kind o' metallic jerk that gets beyond colour a'thegither. I used to sit and watch for them. It becomes a sort o' fascination; it's like waiting to hear a pistol shot when ye see a man aiming."

"I suppose you did a little painting as well while you were up the river?" inquired Master Willie, dexterously.

"Pent? Bless the laddie, what did I go there for but to pent? I pented a sign-board to begin wi', which was a good, honest piece o' work; and I made fifteen sketches at least; and I came home £20 richer than when I went, just to find a young idjut wearing himself away for want o' the common necessaries o' life. For that's what it comes to, my callant; and if ye'll no take the £10 I offer ye, I'll no leave grup o' ye until ye write and get the money that's your ain."

And indeed that was what it did come to; for so persistent was the Scotchman, that before he let his companion go that night, Fitzgerald had definitely promised that the next day, if no letter arrived for him in the morning, he would write to Dover, and remind Mr. Hilton Clarke that even the most willing hack must have its handful of corn.

CHAPTER X.

NEW FRIENDS.

JUST at this moment an incident occurred which seemed slight enough in itself, but which proved to have somewhat far-reaching consequences. Among these "Confessions of a Young Man" which Fitzgerald had been forced to print in the *Household Magazine* for lack of more substantial material, was a paper entitled "On Murder." It was chiefly an essay on the doubts of a young sportsman over the killing of beautiful and innocent creatures—his compunction on seeing them lying on the grass stone-dead and besmeared with blood, or, worse still, ineffectually fluttering with broken wing to try to get away from him on his approach. Or suppose he has wounded one of those sea-birds that are extraordinarily tenacious of life; and finds himself forced to murder in cold blood, and with

protracted difficulty, this beautiful, wild-eyed, panting thing? Who could ever forget the mute glance of a wounded roedeer? Or fail to be struck with remorse at the piteous squeal of a kicking and struggling hare? These were the moments of reflection, of contemplation, that occurred in the eagerness of pursuit; they were not pleasant—especially to the sportsman who was alone. But then again the paper went on to speak of doubts on the other side—doubts whether it was not possible to cultivate sentiment to an unwholesome degree. To live by the taking of life was a universal law of nature. Animals had to be killed for food; and if it was objected that the sportsman shot for amusement and not for the procuring of food, one might ask a rabbit which he preferred,—to be killed outright by a charge of No. 5 shot, even in the way of amusement, or to be snared by the keeper for the market, strangling for a couple of hours perhaps with the brass wire getting tighter and tighter. Then the training and hardihood and skill and health of the highest of all the animals had to be considered. In

short, the whole essay was a conflict between Mr. W. Fitzgerald as a hardy, eager, and practised wild-fowl stalker, and Mr. W. Fitzgerald as a literary person of acute, and perhaps even poetic, sympathies.

It is just possible that a consciousness of the impossibility of reconciling these two people had been borne in upon the writer of the article during its progress; for he wound up with an appeal *ad rem*—that is to say, a description of a day's cliff-shooting in the south of Ireland. How, he asked, could one be expected to pause and consider such questions at such a time in such a place? The Atlantic thundering on to the rocks below; the steep cliffs ablaze in the sunlight; the dark mystery of the caves; then a sudden whirr of half-a-dozen pigeons, the quick snap-shot right and left (your feet the while steadying you on a ledge not fourteen inches wide), and then the scramble down to the beach after the slain. The exhilaration of sky and ocean and buffeting sea-winds was fatal, he contended, to metaphysics; even the still small voice of conscience was lost in one's

anxiety not to slip on the close crisp turf and go headlong into the seas below. And so forth, and so forth; however the conflict may have gone in the previous portions of the essay, it was the pupil of Andy the Hopper that had the last word.

Well, on the day following the publication of this article, the following note came to the office :—

"Mrs. Chetwynd presents her compliments to the editor of the *Household Magazine*, and would be much obliged if he would kindly acquaint her with the name and address of the writer of the papers entitled 'The Confessions of a Young Man'?

"Hyde Park Gardens, Monday, 17th."

Now Fitzgerald had had enough experience of the multitude of people who write to newspaper offices on the slightest pretext; and he scarcely looked at this note twice. No doubt, if he sent his name and address, he would receive in reply a pamphlet by a member of the Anti-Vivisectionist Society,

or an appeal for a subscription to the Home for Lost Dogs, or some such thing. So he merely sent a polite reply, in his capacity as assistant-editor, to the effect that it was a rule of the office not to furnish such information; and thought no more of the matter.

However, the next day brought another note.

"DEAR SIR—I respectfully apologise for my intrusion; but I think if you knew the circumstances of the case you would not refuse the request which my aunt made to you yesterday. She is an old lady, who has met with a great sorrow; and she has been very much interested in the series of papers mentioned in her note as recalling to her something of one who was dear to her. I may say frankly that she is very desirous of seeing the gentleman who wrote these papers, if only to thank him for the pleasure he has given her; and I am sure he would not grudge giving up a few minutes of his time some afternoon, if you would

have the kindness to forward this request to him.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"MARY CHETWYND.

"Hyde Park Gardens, Tuesday."

Fitzgerald paid more attention to this note, and even re-read it carefully—with some little admiration of the pretty hand-writing. No doubt, also, in other circumstances, he would not have hesitated for a moment to respond to this simple, frank, and kindly invitation. But the truth was, at this moment he was in no mood for making new acquaintances. Not a word or line had come from Dover; and his four shillings had been reduced to eighteenpence. Kitty was in Dublin; her engagement finished; her immediate prospects somewhat uncertain. Moreover, if it came to that, his clothes were a trifle too shabby for the paying of afternoon-calls; and so, having written a formal note as from the editor, informing Miss Chetwynd that her letter had been

forwarded to the contributor referred to, he folded up the sheet of note-paper and laid it aside, considering the correspondence closed.

Two days after he found among the letters awaiting him at the office one with the welcome Dover post-mark on it. He eagerly opened it.

"DEAR FITZGERALD—Don't be in a hurry. I'll make it all right.

"Yours ever,

"HILTON CLARKE.

"*P.S.*—I enclose a bit of copy."

He looked at that for some time, not knowing what to think. In the midst of his perplexity, Mr. Scobell made his appearance; and Mr. Scobell was evidently in a very bad temper.

"I say, Fitzgerald, this won't do at all, you know," said he, putting his hat down and taking a chair. "I say this won't do at all. I've stood it long enough."

"What?" said the assistant-editor, calmly.

"You know very well. I'm not going to

put my money into a thing simply for the amusement of somebody else. I say it isn't fair; I don't call it gentlemanly. The magazine is going down every week; I say the circulation is going down; and it never was much; and it'll soon be nothing. And all the time I'm paying my money to a gentleman who amuses himself at Dover! I won't stand it. It's false pretences. I pay him; he's my servant; and he should do his work."

"But he writes there," said Fitzgerald. "I have just this minute got an article in MS. from him."

"Oh, it's no use trying to humbug me——"

"I beg your pardon, I am not trying to humbug you," said Fitzgerald, with an angry colour in his face, "and if you've got any complaint to make against Hilton Clarke, you might make it to himself. I'm not responsible for him."

"No, nobody is responsible; and the magazine is going to the devil!" exclaimed Mr. Scobell. "That's just it. I'm losing

money every week; and nobody is responsible!"

Master Willie was on the point of saying that precious little of Mr. Scobell's money had found its way into his pocket; but he refrained.

"Has Hilton Clarke ever denied his responsibility?" said he, somehat warmly. "It is not necessary for an editor always to be on the spot. If the magazine is not succeeding, it is a pity; but I suppose it was a commercial speculation, like any other. I consider that Hilton Clarke has put very good work into it; and his name as editor was of itself valuable——"

"Look here, Fitzgerald," said Mr. Scobell, in a milder tone, "I'm not complaining of you. You are doing your work well enough; and Clarke's too, for the matter of that. You may stick up for him, if you like; but what I say is that it isn't fair of him to go and neglect his business. I pay him. Confound it, I pay him; he takes my money; and amuses himself at the Lord Warden hotel! If you were getting his salary, I could under-

stand your sticking up for him. And the airs he gives himself. 'Scobell, my dear fellow!' But he takes my money; and I'm getting tired of it; and that's the long and the short of it."

"I don't think," said Fitzgerald, slowly, as if he wanted to gain nerve, "I don't think, Mr. Scobell, that if Mr. Clarke knew you were discontented, he would wish you to continue the magazine. He would probably ask you to give it up at once."

"Discontented!" exclaimed Scobell, with a not unnatural indignation. "Haven't I a right to be discontented? Isn't it losing me money every week?"

"But that possibility was before you when you started it," observed Fitzgerald respectfully.

"Oh, I don't care about supply and demand and all that d—d nonsense," said Mr. Scobell, somewhat inappropriately. "Theories don't make the loss of money any the pleasanter. And I say to myself, Why should I go on losing money? I never proposed to pay for keeping Hilton Clarke

at the Lord Warden hotel. That wasn't spoken of when I started the magazine. What do I gain by it? It isn't even known as my magazine, losing as it is; it's Hilton Clarke's; it's his name that's connected with it in everybody's mouth—that is, when anybody speaks of it. But they don't. They don't even cut the edges of it at my club. I go into my club, and I ask people about the articles in it; they don't know anything about them. I have mentioned it when I have gone into sassiety; no one has heard of it. What is it to me? What am I paying for? Why, when I wrote a paragraph about a new brand of champagne imported by a particular friend of mine, I couldn't get it printed in my own magazine! I like that! He struck it out without saying a word!"

"Oh no; I struck it out," said Fitzgerald.

"You!" said Mr. Scobell, with an angry glare.

"It was agreed at the very outset that there was to be no private influence like that brought to bear," said Fitzgerald, respectfully but quite coolly. "That kind of

thing is fatal to a paper. A single paragraph that the public would suspect would ruin it——"

"How far off ruin is it now?" said the other, scornfully.

"Well," said Fitzgerald, "I did what I thought was right; and I don't want to shirk the responsibility. I know it is what Hilton Clarke would have done; and I was acting for him; and I had no time to ask him first. But if you are dissatisfied with the magazine as a whole," he continued, formally, "or with my share in it, the remedy is simple, as far as I am concerned. You may consider my place vacant from this minute."

He rose. Scobell seemed rather disconcerted for a second; but immediately he said—

"Sit down, Fitzgerald. Wait a moment. I'm not blaming you; you've done your best; you've done all the work; I wish to goodness we had started with you as editor, and saved Hilton's Clarke's salary."

"Considering that the idea of the magazine was his"—Fitzgerald tried to interpolate;

but the proprietor was bent on mollifying him, and would not be interrupted.

"What's more, though I say it to your face, when I have heard any one in my own circle speak of the magazine at all it has been about those papers of yours. Mrs. Chetwynd spoke to me yesterday. She said she had written to you. Now that's what I like. I like to be connected with something that is spoken of among a good set of people. I confess to a little weakness that way; I like to be able to say something about the magazine, and hear it approved by the best people. And I said you would be delighted to call."

"I didn't know that was part of my duties," said Fitzgerald, somewhat stiffly.

"What?" replied Mr. Scobell, with a stare.

"To go and call on strangers. Why should I call on Mrs. Chetwynd? I never heard of her."

"God bless my soul, never heard of the Chetwynds!" exclaimed Mr. Scobell. "There are no better known people in Lon-

don. The very best people are glad to know them. I used to meet Mrs. Chetwynd everywhere in sassiety until her nephew died. Her husband, you must have heard of; why, he was deputy-lieutenant of my own county, before they made him Governor of Tasmania. And she was one of the Cork Barrys; she was delighted to hear you were a countryman of hers. Not know the Chetwynds! But you will be charmed with them, I assure you —I will take you there myself, if you like!"

Not only, however, did Fitzgerald decline this magnanimous offer, but he even hinted that he would much rather not go and call on these strangers. He was not familiar with the ways of London life; he was busily occupied; and so forth. Whereupon Mr. Scobell, who appeared to have promised Mrs. Chetwynd that she should make the acquaintance of the young man, went on a different tack altogether, and appealed to his generosity. It appeared that this poor old lady had recently lost her nephew, in whom her whole life had been bound up. She had adopted him as her son; she had left him in

her will everything belonging to her—for his sister, Mary Chetwynd, was already amply provided for; she had made over to him by deed of gift a small property in Cork, on the shores of Bantry Bay. Then a luckless stumble when he was out riding one day in Windsor Park brought an end to all the fair hopes of which he was the centre; and since then the old lady seemed to do nothing but mourn his memory, while keeping up a strange and keen interest in the various pursuits he had followed. She knew all the hunting appointments; she read accounts of the new breechloaders; she took in the sporting papers. And somehow or other she had got it into her head that these "Confessions of a Young Man" were just such essays as would have been written by this beloved nephew of hers, if he had turned his mind to literature; for they were continually touching on the sports and pastimes that he enjoyed. Was it wonderful that she should wish to see the writer? Was it a great sacrifice for him to give up ten minutes of an afternoon to please an old woman who

had suffered much and who was near the grave? The upshot of Mr. Scobell's representations and entreaties was that Fitzgerald agreed to call at the house in Hyde Park Gardens on the following afternoon.

But until then? Well, he had discovered that cocoa-nut with new bread was an excellent thing with which to stave off the pangs of hunger, and he had a few coppers left; while in the evening on getting down to the Fulham Road, he took the precaution of putting out the light early, and slipping off to bed, so that John Ross should not think he had come home. The worst of it was that this extreme privation produced deplorable fits of sleeplessness; and as the brain seems to take a pleasure in painting the gloomiest possible pictures in the middle of the night, the thing that haunted him chiefly was the prospect of his having to visit a pawnbroker's shop. He thought of the man looking at him; he felt his own self-consciousness tingling in his face; he wondered whether he should be suspected of being a thief. No; he could not do that. He could

not go into a pawnbroker's shop. He would go out into the open streets rather, and offer to sell his boots to the first passer-by. Besides (this was the cheering thought that came with the first gray light of the morning) he had still some pence left; and cocoa-nut and bread was not an expensive meal; and who could tell but that Hilton Clarke had at last taken enough trouble to reckon up what was owing to him, and had already sent it off?

About four o'clock the next afternoon, Mr. Scobell called at the office and persuaded Fitzgerald to accompany him to Hyde Park Gardens. In the brougham, as they were driving up, he endeavoured to impress his companion with a sense of the advantages of getting into good society. It was so important for a young man. True, the Chetwynds did not entertain as they had done before the sad death of the nephew; but good people—people one ought to know—went about the house. Fitzgerald, who rather felt himself in the position of a slave being carried off for exhibition, listened in silence. He had had nothing to eat since breakfast: perhaps

it was that circumstance that made the prospect of being introduced to "good people" a somewhat intangible benefit.

However, after all, as it turned out, he was glad he went, for he was quite delighted with this old lady, whom he found propped up in an easy-chair by the side of the tall French window. He forgot all about Mr. Scobell's pompous patronage of him; he ignored his presence altogether, indeed, for he was so charmed with this little dainty white-haired woman, who talked so sweetly, and with a touch of sadness too, and who moreover had just the faintest something in her tone that told him that she too in her youth must have heard the chimes of St. Anne's. Did he know Bantry, she asked. Why, of course he did! And Glengariff? Certainly. Bearhaven? He had only seen that in the distance. Perhaps he had never heard of Boat of Garry?

She seemed to hesitate a little as she mentioned this last place; and as Fitzgerald was replying that he had not heard of it—that, indeed, he did not know much of Bantry

Bay—she was silent for a second or so, and he thought there was a little moisture in her eyes, and that her mouth was inclined to be tremulous. But that passed instantly. The pretty little old lady grew quite cheerful again; she said she could see in his writing that he was what the Bantry people called a "great sporter;" and wondered how he could write so much when he seemed to spend all his life out-of-doors.

"That is all over now," said Fitzgerald. "I've sold myself into slavery."

"And do you find London a lonely place?"

"Yes, rather."

"But you will soon make plenty of friends. Where can Mary be, I wonder."

Just at this moment, as if in answer to her question, the door was opened, and a young lady came into the room and went up and shook hands with Mr. Scobell.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said the old lady, "let me introduce you to my niece."

As he rose he found before him a tall young woman, who had exceedingly shrewd and clear

and yet merry eyes, a fine face, handsome rather than pretty, and with a good deal of decision in it. Altogether the first impression produced on him by this young lady was not entirely sympathetic. He liked gentleness in women. This young person looked as if she could take very good care of herself. However, this first impression was modified when she spoke. She had a soft and musical voice, beautifully modulated; and she talked with a bright cheerfulness and frankness that was pleasant to hear. For one thing, he thought it strange that her dress, which was scrupulously plain and neat, should not be black, seeing that it was for her brother that Mrs. Chetwynd appeared to be still in mourning.

"I suppose auntie has apologised to you, Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, "and I ought to also. You must have thought me terribly intrusive; but I think our friends have spoilt us with their kindness of late; and soon I expect to find auntie printing on her cards of invitation 'Mrs. Chetwynd commands the attendance of So-and-so at five o'clock tea

on Tuesday next.' Really they are too kind; and but for that I don't know what my aunt would do, because I have to be so much out of the house at present."

"How you find time for all you have to do, Mary, I can't make out," said the pleasant old lady. "You see, Mr. Fitzgerald, I get blinder and blinder every day, and Mary has to be my eyes for me. But this is the worst of it, that I am a silly old woman, and like to have read to me nice things. Mary is of the younger generation, and cares for nothing but science, and education, and teaching people how many miles it is to the sun, as if there was any chance of their getting there. It is really too hard on her; and I can scarcely read at all now; and the way she sacrifices her time——"

"It isn't my time that is to be considered at all, Mr. Scobell," said the young lady, brightly, "but you have no idea what my aunt will insist on my reading to her. Pretty stories, and poems of the affections; I do believe nothing would please her so much as a whole column of the sentimental verses—

breaking hearts and the rest of it—that the local poets send to the country newspapers."

"But aren't these interesting enough?" said Fitzgerald; perhaps conscious that he himself had appeared frequently in that quarter.

"They are a little monotonous, are they not," said the young lady of the clear eyes, regarding him with something like scrutiny. "A little too much of love and dove, and posies and roses?"

"At all events they are human nature," said he—with some slight flush in his face. "If they are not merely literary imitations—if they are the real expression of the hopes or fancies or feelings of the writers, I cannot imagine anything more interesting. It is a human life laid bare; and that to me is more interesting than a frog's foot or the question whether there is bismuth in the moon."

She regarded him for a moment curiously. Then she rose.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Scobell; I have to get to Whitechapel by half-past five. Good-bye, auntie dear!"

She kissed her aunt; she bowed to Fitzgerald; and left the room. Fitzgerald, without knowing why, experienced a sense of relief.

How pretty this dear little old lady looked sitting in state there, with the glow of the afternoon lending a faint colour to the somewhat worn and sad face. Fitzgerald thought he had never seen such silvery hair. And she seemed pleased to have visitors; she prattled away about the things of the hour, and what this or that distinguished person was doing; and all through, by a chance remark here or there, she would remind Fitzgerald that she was his countrywoman. And when they rose to leave, she made a direct appeal to Master Willie to come and see her again whenever he had an idle half-hour; for she was an inquisitive old woman, she said; and she could not read; and she liked to know what was going on.

When they got outside Fitzgerald's admiration broke forth.

"Well, that is a most delightful old lady!" he exclaimed. "It is simply delightful to hear her talk. And she seems to have

known everybody worth knowing for the last sixty years."

"Yes," said Mr. Scobell, in his lofty manner, as the footman opened the door of his brougham for him. "Yes. They are a good sort of people, the Chetwynds. They are very well known in sassiety. I have a few more calls to make; ta, ta!"

So Fitzgerald set out to walk home. He had had some tea and a piece of cake; and that was cheering; in fact, it had raised his spirits so much that he now resolved that, if John Ross were at home, he would frankly ask him for a share of his supper that evening; and he knew pretty well that Ross would be as glad to give it as he to get it. It was not, however, his supper that chiefly occupied his thoughts as he walked down to the Fulham Road. More than once he kept thinking of Mary Chetwynd, and of her manner towards him, and of what that could possibly be that called her to Whitechapel.

CHAPTER XI.

A DISCLOSURE.

QUITE clearly matters were approaching a climax. Notwithstanding all his shifts and devices, Fitzgerald was at length forced to accept a loan of a few pounds from his neighbour below; and he at the same time sent an urgent note to Hilton Clarke representing how his affairs stood. Of course, he never doubted but that that appeal would be instantly answered.

Days passed; there were no tidings of any sort. Finally, two letters that had been forwarded to the Lord Warden hotel were returned through the Post-office, with the intimation that Mr. Hilton Clarke had gone away and left no address.

Fitzgerald, very much aghast, took these letters to Mr. Silas Earp. The heavy black-a-vised manager regarded them in

his usually lugubrious way, and merely observed—

"A very good job if we hear no more about him. He was only drawing his salary, and doing no work."

"But," said Fitzgerald, who was rather bewildered, "but he owes me my salary. I have never had anything since the magazine was started, except £10!"

"That's a pity," said the other, slowly. "I always heard he was fishy about money matters—and other matters, too."

"I don't know what you mean!" said Fitzgerald, quickly. "Of course he'll pay me. I don't doubt that. But it's too bad of him to be so careless——"

"I expect he has spent all the money by this time. Wish I had known; I'd have told you not to have Hilton Clarke in your debt, to the tune of twopence. It's a pity; I don't expect you'll ever see a farthing of it."

"You don't mean to say that you accuse him of stealing my salary?" said Fitzgerald —but his resentment against this implication

was accompanied by a wild guess at what his own situation would be if it were true.

"Oh no, I don't say that," said the manager, regarding him. "I wouldn't call it that. He wouldn't look at it in that light. But you ought to know Hilton Clarke better than I do. I only know of him by report; and I know I wouldn't lend him a sovereign I couldn't afford to lose."

Fitzgerald went back to his own room, and sate down. It was not only the loss of the money—supposing this thing were true—that troubled him. He could replace that loss in time. But to think that this friend of his, who had seemed so kind and considerate, who had such delicate perceptions and sympathies in literary matters, could act like a common, vulgar scoundrel, and that in a peculiarly callous fashion, this it was that crushed him. But only for a few seconds. He refused to believe such a thing. He was ashamed of himself for having deemed it possible. He went back to Mr. Silas Earp, and told him that he need not mention to any one the fact of Hilton Clarke's being

pecuniarily indebted to him, Fitzgerald, for of course the matter would be put straight. The lugubrious manager regarded him, as if with a little sad curiosity, and only said "Very well."

The next few days were days of deep suspense to Fitzgerald, for he knew not what to think of this persistent silence. When the explanation came, it was short and decisive. One morning he went into the office as usual. Mr. Silas Earp met him.

"The fat's in the fire now," said the manager, calmly. "Mr. Scobell has been here this morning. A mad bull is a fool to him."

"What is the matter, then?"

"The story got all over London last night, he says. And the magazine is to be stopped this week. There is the announcement."

He handed the stupefied assistant-editor a printed slip with these words underlined in writing — "We have to announce to our readers this week that the publication of the *Household Magazine* ceases with the present number."

"But what is it all about? What is the story?"

"Well, I only got bits, he was in such a rage," said the manager. "It's all about Lady Ipswich, I believe; and when her brother found her at last at Geneva, with Hilton Clarke, she wouldn't come back, not a bit. She says Sir John can sue for a divorce if he likes."

Fitzgerald was staggered, but only for a moment.

"And even if the story is true," he cried, "what has that to do with the magazine? Why stop the magazine on account of it? We never advised our readers to run away with other people's wives; it has nothing to do with the magazine!"

"Oh, but Mr. Scobell wants to smash something or somebody," the manager said, calmly. "His wife is furious; Lady Ipswich was a friend of hers. And then there's money; Mr. Scobell thinks Hilton Clarke only started this magazine to get money out of him——"

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said Fitzgerald,

warmly. "That is quite preposterous. Hilton Clarke may be this or that, but he is not a deliberate swindler. He wouldn't take the trouble. He is too self-indulgent. And then if you go and stop the magazine now, you make an association between it and this scandal that doesn't exist. You draw attention to it. You ask people to believe——"

But at this moment Mr. Scobell himself made his appearance; and an angry man he was. It was in vain that Fitzgerald pointed out to him that to stop the magazine that very week would be the very thing to make the public believe there was some connection between it and what had happened. "Sassiety," Mr. Scobell declared, was talking of nothing but this scandal; and here was Hilton Clarke's name outside the periodical that he owned; a nice thing to have the editor of your own paper run away with the wife of one of your own friends, and lead everybody to believe that you had introduced them. He would have no more of this. He had lost enough money, without having to incur scandal as well. No doubt it was a

fine thing for literary men to have a paper go on for ever——

"But what do you mean by that?" said Fitzgerald, with a sharpness that brought Mr. Scobell to his senses. "If you are tired of the magazine, and have no faith in it, drop it when you like; I was only anxious you should not associate it with a merely personal scandal. But you needn't talk as if it had been a fine thing for me. For all my work on it I have received £10; I should have made more at sweeping a crossing."

Mr. Scobell was bewildered; but when the circumstances were explained to him, he not only exempted Fitzgerald from the vague charge he had brought against literary persons generally, but said he had been infamously treated, and that as he might suffer from the sudden cessation of the magazine some compensation was due to him.

"It was plunder—a deliberate scheme for plunder," he maintained. "And he has done you as he has done me. It isn't more than three weeks since he got an extra £100 from me; it was a deliberate swindle. He

never cared about the magazine; he never worked for it; it was a scheme to get money——"

"It was nothing of the kind, Mr. Scobell," said Fitzgerald, bluntly. "I know what he thought of the magazine; I talked enough with him about it. He expected it to be a great property; and that, as he had presented you with the idea, he ought to have a liberal salary and not too much work. He is a self-indulgent man; he can deny himself nothing. If you and I have lost this money, you can afford to lose it better than I can; but there's no use in making wild charges. It was not a scheme to defraud; that is absurd. I think he was very soon disappointed; he didn't care to work after that. And then it was a pity the money should all have been placed in his hands; he always seemed to think he had a right to everything within his reach. And then I suppose this opportunity—this temptation—was too much for him, don't you see——"

"Well, you take it pretty quietly," said Scobell, almost with a touch of indignation,

"seeing you must have lost £60 or £70 through him."

"It wasn't altogether that I was thinking of," said Fitzgerald. "I liked him."

Mr. Scobell adhered to his determination to stop the magazine; but he sent Fitzgerald a solatium in the shape of a cheque for £25. Thus it was that Fitzgerald found himself with about four or five months' pretty hard work thrown away, with much less money in his pocket than he had come to London with, and without that friend on whose occasional word of sympathy or advice he had counted. But he was not much dismayed, after all. Other people had come to London and fared worse. He saw lots of things he thought he could do—driving a Hansom, if it came to that. If his literary adventures had so far been unsuccessful, he had all the more material in his desk for use when the opportunity arrived. He was free from debt, for he had taken instant care to repay John Ross; he could live on little; he had the hope and courage of three-and-twenty; and when he wanted relief from the cares and

troubles of the world he had the faculty of entirely losing himself in a play or a poem, so that it was of little consequence to him whether the night was cold, or whether there was supper in his room or not. Besides, was he not the most fortunate of mortals in the possession of Kitty? How could a man be unhappy who had one true heart continually thinking of him, and cheering him with messages of trust and love and confidence?

"My brave Boy," Kitty wrote, on hearing of the catastrophe,—"I'm very glad. It will open your eyes. It's worth the money. Why, you'll never get on at all if you believe in everybody like that; and if you don't get on, what's to become of me? I saw through that whited sepulchre of a wretch; if I had him here just now I'd let him know what I've been thinking of him. And even now you seem disposed to make excuses for him. Perhaps when one person takes money—and cruelly and meanly takes money—that belongs to another person, he isn't called a thief *among gentlemen.* That wouldn't be refined,

perhaps? Now, dear Willie, once for all, it won't do for you to go on like that. All your geese are swans (including me). You have too much poetry about you; and you are too willing to believe in people; and you were made too much of about Inisheen. If you keep all your poetry for me, and make me wonderful and glorious, that's quite right—for that is just the sort of person I am; but you'll have to give up painting fancy portraits of other people. I am younger than you; but I've seen a good lot. But do you think I want my bonny Coulin to be hard-hearted? No, I don't. I want him to keep all his poetry and imagination for me; and not to believe in anybody else—further than he can see them; and then when he has made his way in the world and fought people on their own terms, then he can settle down and let his children make a fool of him to their hearts' content.

"Willie, there's a man in Dublin bothering me with his bouquets again; but I don't allow them to be sent up, even when he manages to get them left, and I haven't even

looked at his card. I go to Belfast on the 13th. My father can't imagine why I don't go to England; but must I not remain faithful to my boy's wishes? Dear Willie, I have read the verses a hundred times over that you sent me with the bracelet on my birthday; but why are they so sad? I like particularly that one that ends—

> 'O aching heart, that sinks or swells
> Whene'er at night you hear the sound
> So far away of Shandon Bells!'

But are you so very lonely then; and only making believe to be comfortable and happy when you write to me? Really, when I see the people who haven't an ounce or an atom of your genius driving past in their fine carriages, I have no patience. And they come to the concert and sit in the stalls with their diamonds and opera-cloaks; and the young men so spick and span. Things are not right. What can *they* do? Can they do anything but drive in the Phœnix—the Phaynix I suppose they'd call it. Yes, and I wonder how long we may have to go on this way—every-

thing unsettled, and a long distance between us. And now you have to begin all over again, thanks to your fine friend. But if you're not afraid, no more am I, and we'll snap our fingers at them yet, and when everything's quite fair and clear, and money all right, then you'll publish a whole volume of poems telling the country all about me and my wonderfulness (I am wonderful, I can tell you; when I think of the way I bear up against your being so far away from me, I am lost in admiration of myself). That reminds me that I have made a conundrum. This is it—'*Why should my Coulin be the happiest man in England?*' Now you may twist this about any way, and you may pull it to pieces, and put it together again, and turn it upside down and round about half a dozen times over, and yet you would never find out the answer. I say *you* wouldn't, anybody else in the world would see it in a moment. It's '*Because I'm in love with him.*' I think this is very good; keep it a secret.

"Your obliged and humble servant,

"KITTY."

London did not feel quite so lonely that evening. There was to be an Irish-ballad concert in St. James's Hall at eight o'clock, and this letter had put him into such a cheerful frame of mind that he thought he would go away up there and get some cheap place; and then, sitting all by himself, and not being obliged to talk to any one, he would be able to hear if any of them could sing the Irish songs like Kitty.

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